Jerzy Kosinski: An Interview / Justice Douglas: Nature's Rights

THE North American Review

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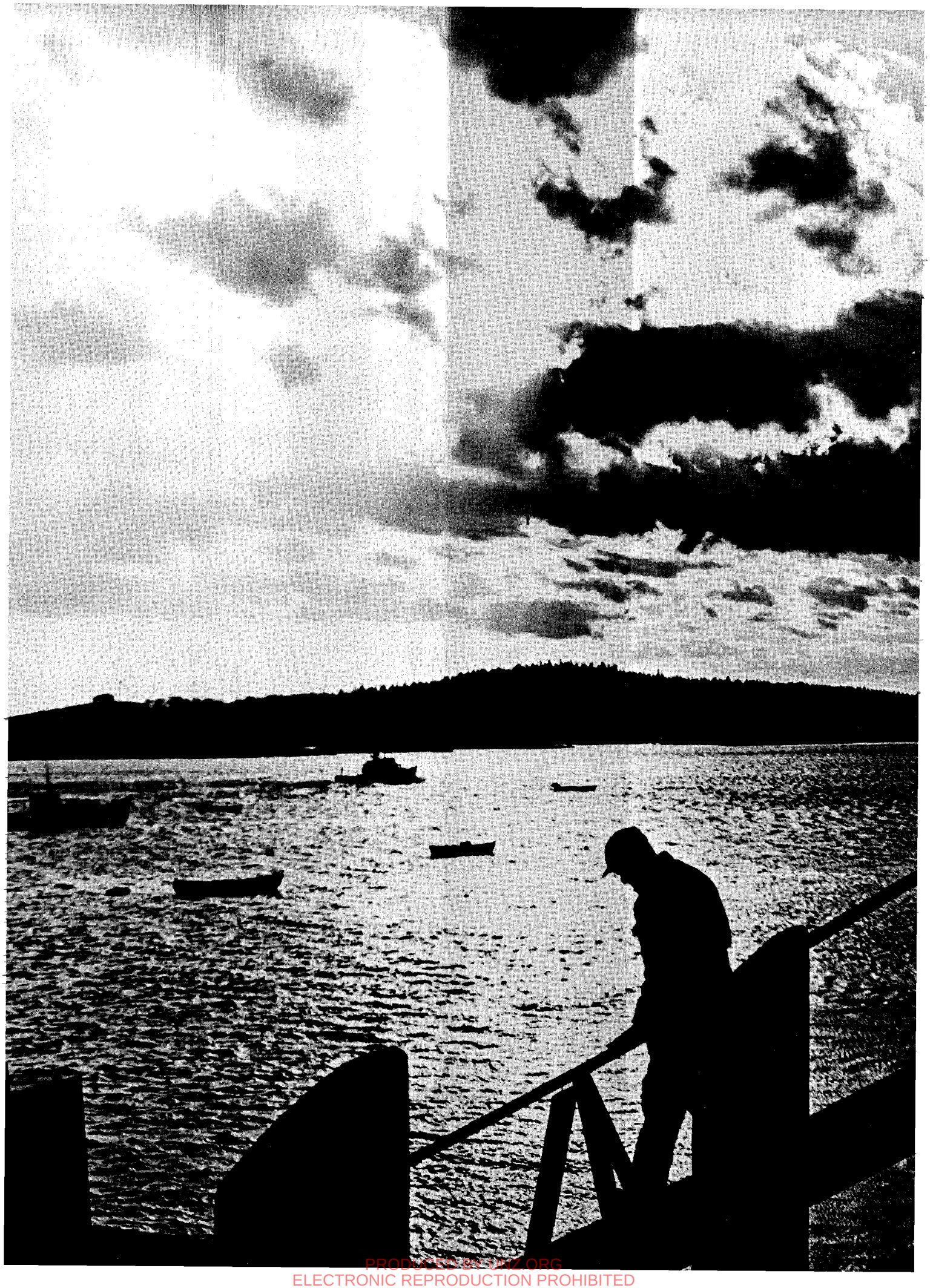

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Vol. 258/No. 1/Spring 1973

# The North American Review

## FEATURES

11 Nature's Constitutional Rights, *by William O. Douglas, with an introduction by Joseph W. Meeker.*

56 The Devil Tree: An Interview with Jerzy Kosinski, *by Daniel J. Cahill*

## FICTION

16 Whispers of Lost Options, *by Paul Byall*

21 The Books that Will Change Your Life, *by Ira Sadoff*

26 Conjurings, Conversation, Reality, etc., *by John Jurkowski*

30 Macula, *by John Hermann*

39 Wedlock, *by Gerald Schoenewolf*

44 About Sweeney, *by Alyce Ingram*

46 Hunting, *by Steve Garmisa*

49 The Volunteer, *by D. L. W. Smith*

52 Rock and Roll Star, *by T. Coraghessan Boyle*

## POETRY

10 The Small-Game Hunter, *by Bin Ramke*

15 Grandmother at the Spinning Wheel, *by Richard Jackson*

19 Dreams, *by Gary Gildner*

20 Lessons, *by Pat O'Donnell*

24 After Play, Walking Home . . . , *by David Evans*

35 Duty, *by Albert Goldbarth*

36 Three Poems for My Father, *by Besmilr Brigham*

48 Childhood Memory, *by Paul Petrie*

50 Changing My Mind, *by Stephen Dobyns*

## DEPARTMENTS

3 American Eye: ISLANDS, *by Kenneth Lash*

7 NAR Heritage: TREES, *by Donald Culross Peattie*

56 Books and Authors: *Daniel J. Cahill, Jerome Klinkowitz, Peter Cooley*

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# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

It's most unusual for the NAR to be concerned with the judiciary; yet Mr. Justice Douglas's dissenting opinion in last year's Mineral King Valley case is so obviously important, it deserves every possible exposure. It begins on page 11, with an informative preface by our environment editor. The Douglas dissent has had its impacts. Disney Productions have modified—by making more modest—their development plans for the Valley, and the Sierra Club has again brought suit to prevent the project. The notion that Nature herself should have legal "standing" seems a plausible one, and perhaps the concept is absolutely necessary at a time when concern for her preservation is more than balanced by the hysteria of those whose solution to rape is more and better rape. "So it goes"—as a friend of ours used to say in a similar context. And so it has always gone; Donald Culross Peattie's essay on the American forests (page 7) is 35 years old—and changed nothing.

In choosing the two dozen or so short stories that appear each year in the NAR, we read about three thousand manuscripts, and one of the oddities of the past decade is that almost none of them have dealt directly with the war in Southeast Asia. Heaven only knows how many fictions we have read that dealt with World War Two—that quaint historical event whose clear lessons in right and wrong are likely to be the last a war will ever teach us—and every once in a while we met a story from the Korean action. Now that the U.S. is at last nominally disengaged from Vietnam, and now that we are watching the return (thank God) of American prisoners, we're publishing—page 16—our Vietnam story. Perhaps the timing is all wrong, and perhaps the story is a little "soft", dealing as it does with an officer brought finally to pacifism. Still, it touches live issues; though the word *peace* is much in the air, amnesty is underfoot and the long struggle to be human continues to have a bad name in high places.



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Kenneth Lash

# Islands

There are, you know, islands off the coast of Maine. With on them rocks and farms and Indian blood. Small bodies of land entirely surrounded by lobster.

So went the talk, and I. I packed and went. Took myself the house for rent sight, as they say, unseen. That being absolutely the point of it.

Throughout a summer we stared at each other, that farmhouse and I. (Nothing being settled I went back five more summers, but the affair never was resolved.)

Diagonally along the bedroom wall a slope of glacial rock; out the window postcards of Norwegian fjords. In back a brown meadow, a well with leaves and waterbugs, one apple tree, twisted. The usual rutted road back into the woods. Springs, runnels, rivulets. In front, the sea. Sun glinting off rock and water, smoking in the giant tops of firs. Mosquitoes. Spooks. The ground spongy. Old shards of granite and buoy. At night the Northern Lights, rattling in the sky without a sound.

In the house I found an old deck of cards and got the hint. It was a wonderful place to play solitaire.

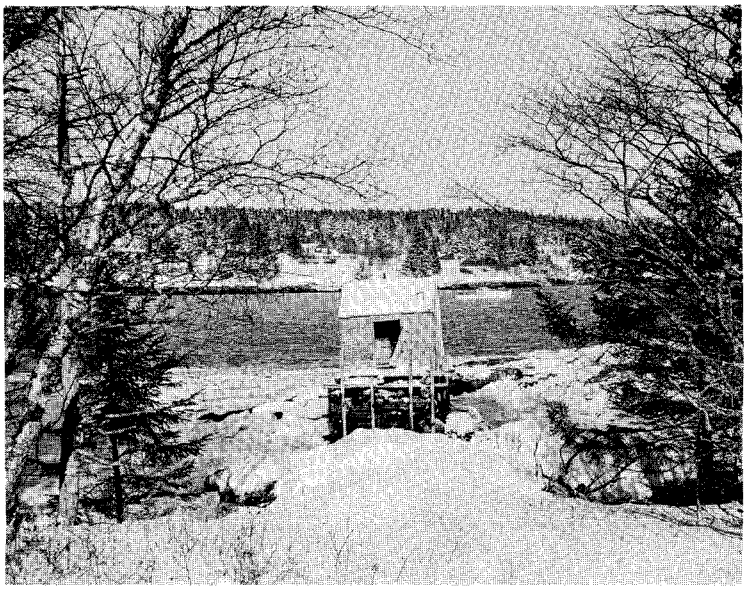
Though Lord knows everyone else was coupling. I've never seen such a place for it. By the time one of those girls was 13 she wouldn't have traded sex-lives with her mother. (Though clearly a few of them did.)

Nothing else to do, you say? Meaning what.

You'd do better to look into the nature of islands. What is borne in upon ones who live there.

Myself I chose a tiny dumpling of 82. Eyes bright and feet of a sparrow. ("It's hotter than love in hayin' time," she'd say of a summer's day.) Cora. And her great-sized daughter Sara. They fought and fought and fought, amid hot apple pies and baths. Their small white house a cocoon and a shrine. All summer we came and went: teachers, painters, neighbors; spidery psychiatrists bearing sweets; friends, countrymen, strangers asking direction. The island doctor, a trilogy, popping up on the porch for a while, listening to Grammy's heart with his eyes. Yes, I called her Grammy. What do you expect?

Protested, she did, my beard and booze, and girls she only guessed at. Garnered at Saturday dances in the village hall. Accordion, violin, piano, drum. Children, arthritics, fishermen, girls, red faces and wool shirts. Bottles in pockets, purses, closets,





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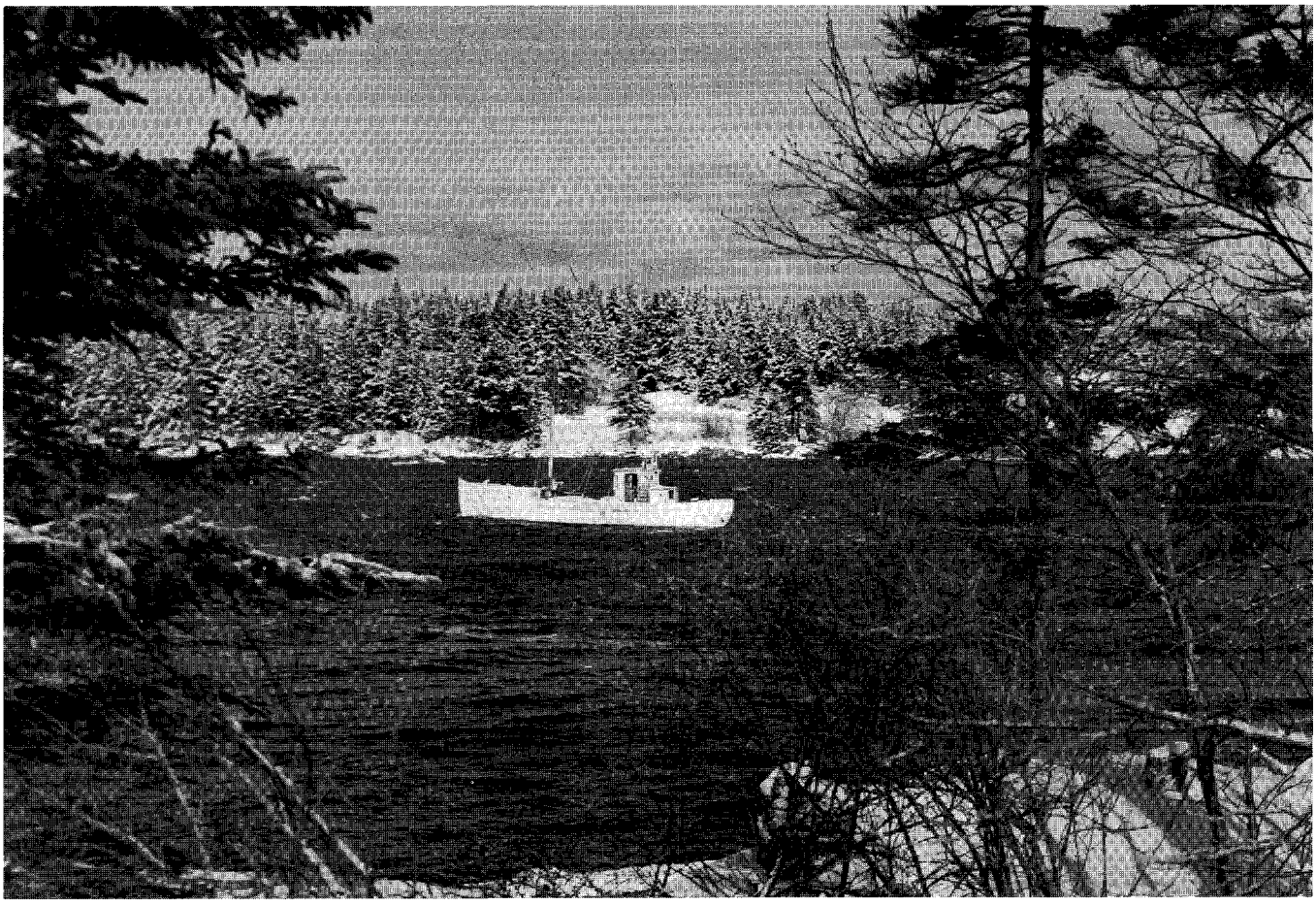

cars; in the chimney, in the piano, in the stuffed moose head; behind bushes, in holes, up in trees. The island, of course, was dry. (The *A & P* had whole shelves of vanilla extract, all large economy size.) Out in the dark beyond the street light, all the parked cars, windows rolled up, bouncing.

Saturday night really was.

Then back I went to the cards and stars. Occasionally of an evening my friend Henry would bump along through the woods, bringing lobsters or girls. But otherwise what?

Mornings to fetch wood and water, afternoons to watch them.

Evenings to play solitaire? I don't know.

'What did you *do* there all summer, alone in the woods?' I don't remember what I answered. Maybe if I thought they needed comforting I told them about those Saturday nights. Or if it was poetry they wanted, the other stuff. Or it could have been a matter of what *I* wanted. If I had picked blueberries once or twice, I could say, 'I picked blueberries.' That's the way life is.

Or at least that's the way it is if, once or twice, you did. Failing that, your back's to the wall. With the usual choices. 'I grew a beard,' you can say. Or, 'I picked peanut butter.'

I can tell you what I didn't do. I didn't go for walks. First, there was no need to. Second, this is not the story of a miracle. Save an occasional forage for food or view, I stayed around that farmhouse as if beset by bears. And more often in it than out. Because I was beset by mosquitoes. I didn't read, either. Which is my way of walking. In all those unoccupied hours, hardly at all. And that, I tell you, is weird. But watch the 10¢-psychology. I wasn't prostrate, and if I'd been bleeding it's exactly books I'd have used for bandage. Why for God's sake when I got that Dear John letter in Bordeaux I spent weeks in the library finding out what was wrong with her. Besides, I was learning to cook. For the first time in my life. And on a kerosene burner. How do you like *them* apples?

Recently in a dream I learned that Sara didn't live in the white house any more. Saucy Cora is dead. In a little added wing of the house Sara used to keep a souvenir shop. Cards, candies, toy lobster pots, lobster ashtrays, lobster lamps. Now it had been changed, set sideways, the windows emptied of



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objects. Above it a long painted sign in black on white said Herb Cook & Co.

I repeat, how do you like *them* apples?

Mussels, blackberries, crabapples, clams. Mussels grew in thick bunches along a low wall of rocks strung in the water across the neck of an inlet near the farmhouse. Remains of an attempt at a lobster pound. According to Henry the guy bought live lobsters from the lobstermen, dropped them behind the wall into his natural pound, and sat down to await the bounty of nature in Her increase. Fair enough. More than fair, thought the lobstermen. So next spring they set their pots in the sea just outside the inlet. Knowing damn well that no wall of rocks made like a Vermont fence is gonta hold no lobster worth his size, who comes equipped about like a hardware store. So for a couple of years while it lasted, they sold the man his own lobsters, and made good mileage of them. The man himself, who must have come to misdoubt the fertilities of his lobsters, perhaps took comfort in the fact that they were certainly each year growing larger. By the time I got there the wall was visible only at low tide.

Many things of the island were accessible only at low tide.

There's a temptation to let that go. I think I will. Many things of that island were inaccessible to me at any tide. As for instance a great pond not a quarter-mile sideways from the farmhouse. I never saw it. The only way to see it was to fall in. Thick brush, under and over, went right out into it. Or so I hear. As I heard more than saw old ruins, abandoned logging camps, quarries, houses, fields, people—Scandinavians who long ago came here to the island to work in the granite quarries and never returned. Nor, as with earlier Norse, quite reached America. As a result their eyes didn't focus, or had gone brownish. Blue pupils afloat in vanilla extract. Down in the cellar towheaded kids playing whatever they wanted to play. Or out at the old quarry, swimming in the bottomless pool that now sat there.

I heard too Davey the drinking Scot, who still spoke with a strong burr though he hadn't been home in 20 years. Mother, father, brothers, all alive and well in Edinburgh. It remained, later, for me to see them for him. Though I hardly knew him, he sent me as a token. Canny. Must have known I'd lie for him like Marlow. And knew for sure it wouldn't be hard, so warm they were at home.

There was an old Italian too, named of course Tony, who supposedly had a terrible temper, so that no one spoke to him and children were afraid. This bogeyman lived alone in a small house at the edge of the village, across from the docks. Within yards of him

were a sardine cannery, stink, fish-heads, screaming gulls, oil and gas, a dump, fog, salt. And in the middle of it, there was Tony in his garden, growing vegetables two feet long or two pounds round. As if, for Christ's sake, it were a slope in sunny Italy.

Islands of America. Good God. When in later years Germanesque psychologists began invading the place it felt like the beginning of the end in a Greek play. As if they had been summoned. Dark Furies. But modern ones. They responded to the call by bringing their patients with them.

Further confrontations of love. In its fiercest and most inarticulate form. Walking around smiling at snakes. Calling the fishermen sailors. (Do not send to sea for whom the bell tolls.) Looking sometimes under the light of pines like surprised lemmings. Not questioning the leap no,

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only the landing. If you could call it that on a piece of deliquescent stone dead-center in a horizon. Children and houses less made than extruded, like coral. Stillness. In the sky, stars echoing it. Underneath, the unpossessed. Away horizontally from the land, vertically from the sea, living with their own mistakes. What would you expect if not ghosts. Stillness. Island love with its hatreds. The final enemy not history but memory. Felt history. What's in the mere knowing?—where few live, all are scholars. So after the love and hate were stormed off, fogged off, boned and salted, only the ineffable remained in those eyes. Or came like a sudden film over yours. As for example when fog or storm were so heavy that the island boat couldn't try those 12 miles to mainland for groceries and mail. Worse yet if it went but couldn't return. Not hearing its horn rounding into the island in late afternoon, was the final stillness. After that one could only wait. Be content to wait? I suppose so. Yes, that was the surprise at the bottom. Lord knows sun or storm, drunk or sober, there was an air of choice about that place. Saturday night or Sunday morning. Ineffable. Yes. Solitary. Standing scared under Northern Lights. Great flapwings of them in the night sky. Eyes ridged and sea-rilled trying to open wide after days of glint off rock and water. Trying to open wide enough to encompass the doings in that sky. The sound of the sea incessant, but now truly loud, for once really a roar. The lion gone ridiculous at the gates. While in half the sky those Lights flap, without a sound.

I don't know what it was like in winter.

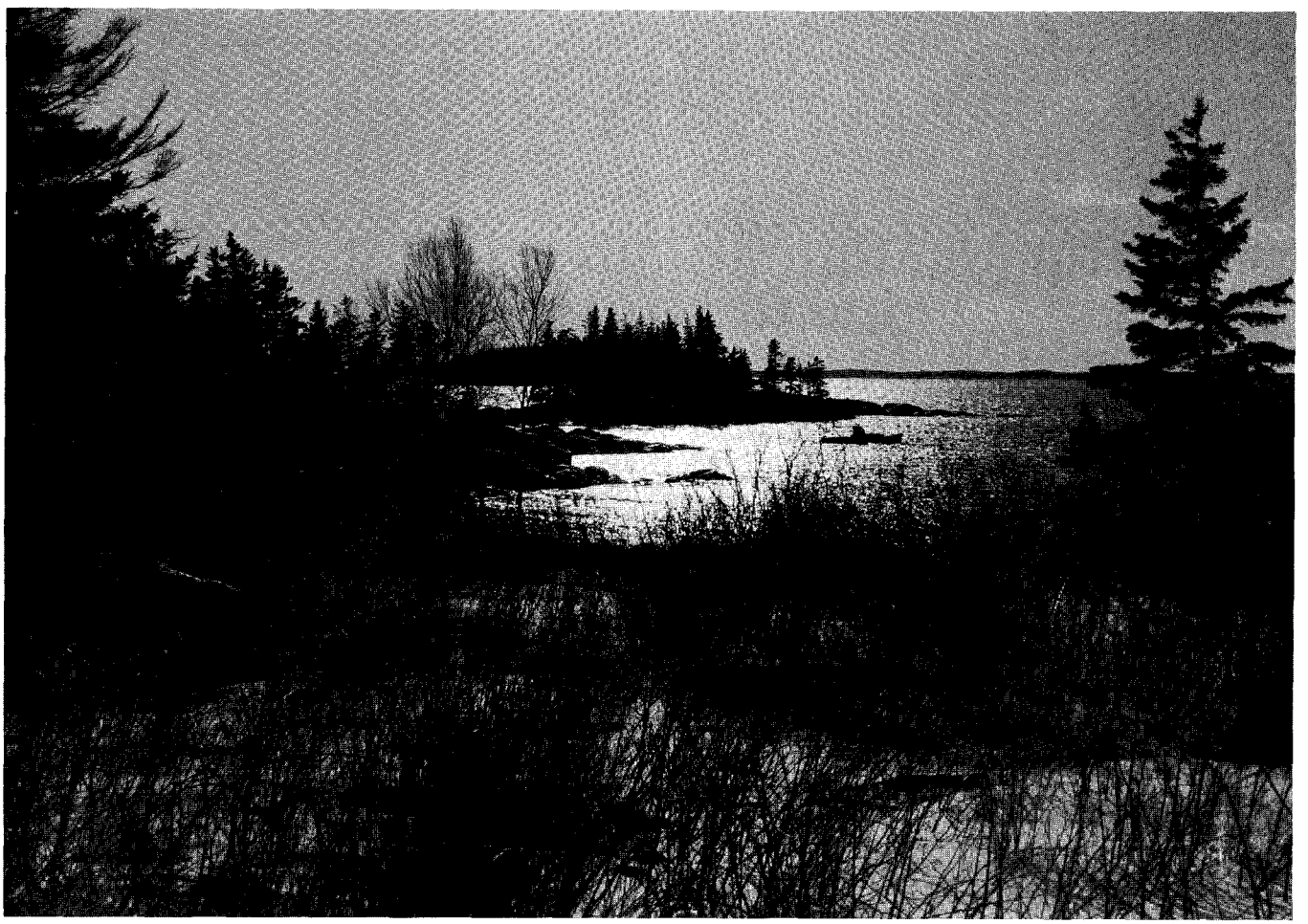
Five more summers I went back. But often I brought someone with me. During the winter whenever I got a letter from the island there'd be a message from the postmaster written on the back of the envelope. Hi there. Orville.

There.

The word changes. Places drop their names like masks. Here, and there.

Never mind the ocean, that's for visitors. The desert would do as well. But the farmhouse, the trees, the rocks. The buzz and ferment of that surrounded ground. The incredible busyness of that solitude.

And the drunken bitter laughing incestuous people, not content. Content to wait? □





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Donald Culross Peattie

# Trees

Environmental concern is no present-day novelty, though earlier expressions of it — in a more simple America — could be grounded in morality and sincere patriotism. A renowned naturalist wrote the essay below for the Winter 1937-38 number of this magazine.

I saw them first, the redwoods, at twilight; came on them unexpectedly, when I was not looking for them, but hastening somewhere else. At that late hour there was not another car parked at the gates, when my own was brought swiftly to a stop, to a reverent hushing of the engine.

A silent, awestruck, mortal mayfly, I walked fearfully between their boles, greater than the shafts of any temple, and threw my head back to see the last sunset light sweeping through the dark, sempiternal fronds. An incense of coastal fog, too, was flowing through the unattainable tops. My feet, on the deep humus carpet of centuries of needle-fall, made not a sound. Nowhere, in the mist rose-blurred with afterglow, was there a sound except the voice of a single bird, at his vespers, a disembodied voice in the clerestory of this sacred grove.

Time, out of eons we cannot number, was at a halt. Darkness would come, and another day, but not change. For the perfect thing, the unsurpassable act of creation, had been attained, created. Nothing good that would ever happen hereafter, no human construction, no mortal dreams of any sort of handwrought beauty, could surpass this. God, or Nature, had lifted a final hand from an ultimate miracle. Here let no human voice presume to preach. Here a brook ran, laving roots of trillium and stream orchis, wild ginger and the great white chalice blossoms of oxalis. Here some green slip of a warbler might praise without impiety. But let there be no other sound or motion.

What a story a redwood stump could tell, with its two thousand rings of annual growth. One of the outermost rings carries us back to the landing of the Pilgrims. Count back from there: 1619, 1618, 1600, 1500, 1400, 1100, 1099—you are still only at the First Crusade. The proudest old families can seldom trace a clear record to those troublous times. And still we are not one third the way back to the heartwood.

Keep on counting, year by year. Your eyes will be sore and strained before you get back to the year when Alaric was sacking a fallen humbled Rome. And yet this proud, this lusty American tree, was already a strong young giant. When it was a sapling the Chinese were inventing paper. When it was a hopeful shoot, Pompeii, the pride of pagan pleasure cities, was buried under the ashes of Vesuvius. As the seed sprouted, Christ was born in Bethlehem.

There are older redwoods than this. Some must go back to the Golden Age of Greece; back to the time when Nebuchadnezzar ate grass. Kings may go mad; empires decay. But these forest kings know no decay; their empire is immutable—till man comes. To insect pest and fungus diseases they are practically immune.

The grove where I walked that solemn hour was set aside for the people of the United States. And the public fondly believes that the Save-the-Redwoods League, which did such splendid work, has saved all. Actually, only a fraction of our Sequoias are safe from the sawmills. The only reason that the sound of their grinding is low is that,

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momentarily, not much redwood can be profitably cut and marketed. When money can be made out of selling redwood, the mighty private holdings are going to come crashing down.

It isn't only redwoods, or even chiefly redwoods, that are endangered. Even if we had no redwoods, we would, here on the North American continent, still have the finest timber stands in the world. No other temperate country in historic times has ever owned so many sheer board feet of lumber, or so much of it valuable. Straight-grained, strong and clean, fitted to every use from paper pulp of the soft spruce to cypress piles that under water last practically forever, from the rich naval stores of the Carolina coastal pines to the sweet sap of New England's sugar maples, our eastern forests were once the wonder of the world, and, literally, the envy of kings and ministers of war.

Oriental nations covet our western trees. Japan is importing the rare and mighty Port Oxford cedar at a rate that spells its speedy destruction, unless the move to save it can be jammed through Congress soon. China, which has so recklessly stripped its own forests from its mountains, hungers as only a nation that has eaten its forests can, with a great hunger for our precious Alaska cypress.

Logs and shingles of western arbor vitae and incense cedar are practically eternal. Sugar pines, the mightiest pines in the world, Coulter pines with cones a foot long, Engelmann spruces reaching for Colorado's blue sky, ringing her mountain lakes, Monterey cypress under which a whole village population can stand, weeping spruces like fairy-tale trees come true—these are what we boast, between the Rockies and the Pacific. For their flesh, the sawmills whine and roar.

But when the great trees are gone, no invention of man can put them back. You cannot recreate an extinct organism. Often you cannot even restore the soil that a great forest needs, once it has been garnered to the ground by human harvest. I am not suggesting anything sentimental and impractical; I do not mean that the lumber industry should be abolished, for obviously, we need lumber. It is just because we need it that we shall have to take some care for our vanishing supplies. We shall have to see, for instance, that valuable timber trees are not wasted by being chewed into pulp, when soft, quick-growing trees would do just as well.

Up to the present we have, as a rule and as a whole, treated our forests as a mine. Forest Service has done splendid work in reforestation. It has worked out the theory and put into practice often on the most unpromising and nearly worthless lands, the whole principle of handling our forests as a crop.

Anybody can see that a forest is like a bank account. In the end you cannot take out more than you put in. Your banker cheerfully pays your cheques as long as there is a balance. When that is gone he looks blank; what else can he do? But we of today are rifling accounts and reserves that do not belong to us. We are raiding the Treasury of Mother Nature, peculating what it took her thousands of years to accumulate, and thieving from our own children because we are impoverishing the America of tomorrow.

Some parts of the lumber business have been, literally, sawing off the limb on which they are sitting. They are trying to "sustain the yield" from something that steadily dwindles, and is not proportionately replaced. Instead of retrenching or investing, they continue to live on their capital, at the scale of boom times. Because of the demand for pulp, they are hungering for mighty timber trees that should be reserved for other uses. They are wasters in our household.

The most wasteful methods of lumbering are not as heart-rending to anyone with a grain of patriotism as the destruction caused by forest fires. Between 1926 and 1930 an average of about 41,500,000 acres of our forests were burned over *every year.* So we simply send up in smoke timber reserves, as well as natural beauty (a cash crop to the towns and peoples situated near it) that many a thrifty European country would know how to multiply and use for its citizens.

Experts agree that about eighty-five per cent of all our forest fires are preventable. One fire in every three is started by a cigarette, pipe, cigar, or smoker's tossed-aside match. When you are in the woods do you think where you toss butts and matches? When you smoke in your car do you hurtle the burning tobacco out of it into the dry roadside grasses, or do you put it out first? Yes, you and I and all of us are potential forest-fire starters. If we ever were careless with our smokes (and I know no one who is not) then we can, none of us, know for certain that we are not responsible for damage, loss, even human deaths, that were never brought back to us.

Farmers start a huge number of forest fires by the practice of "burning off brush." Malice or deliberate "spite fires" must be blamed for about one fourth of all. Hot engine cinders formerly did more damage than at present. Only fifteen per cent of all fires in our national heritage of forests could be called of natural origin, lightning, for instance. We are literally burning up money, every year.

You think there is nothing that you can do about it? That between the inscrutable workings of Congress and the expert work of trained foresters, we, the public, can scarce intelligently take a hand in the situation?

Nothing of the sort. It's not enough to refrain from cutting down trees or starting forest fires.

You have a vote, haven't you? And, in the last analysis the congressmen and senators who pass or veto conservation measures, do not dare to quarrel with their electorate. True, your one vote, or a letter or telegram signed only by yourself, might not be heard in the clamor of opinion that besets every lawmaker. But if you will join your vote to those of others who think as you do, if you will add your voice to the great chorus from the people's throats, you will have done your patriotic duty toward the trees of this country.

I am not going, here, to mention any of the conservation societies by name, because I am not barking or ballyhooing for any one in particular. If you want to know what and where they are, ask your state conservation bureau, your state natural history survey; ask the biology teachers at the nearest college, or your county



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agent, or ring up the local Forest Service warden. Your newspaper editor also knows who they are. Some of these societies are better than others; some may be a mere blind for the wasters; others are on the lunatic fringe. Most are perfectly sincere and honest, and not at all visionary or impractical. They all study pending legislation, and know the right people to approach. They know, too, much more about my state and national congressmen than I do—how they have voted in the past, how they are swayed.

And, make no mistake, if you and I do not sway them, the wasters, the enemies of conservation, are going to do so. One of the most efficient lobbying machines in this country works unceasingly to get the forests out of government hands, into private ownership and, eventually, into the teeth of the pulp saws. This political machine watches every forest bill that comes up, and by blunt means or subtle, it opposes the conservation of the American forests. It knows what forest bills are pending in your state and at Washington, even though most of us do not.

And there are such bills, all the time, in the making or breaking. The populace, which is supposed to speak with the voice of God, in a democracy, is very sentimental about trees. But it seldom takes any hand in voting the measures that will keep them standing. Only afterwards, when a desolation of stumps makes a landscape hideous and property nearly or quite worthless, do we wonder why "it wasn't stopped." It wasn't stopped because you and I didn't stop it. Ignorance of the lack of law is no defense.

A single instance: at the present moment if certain interests have their way the proposed enlarged Mount Olympus National Park is threatened with the shearing of about "140,000 acres of heavily timbered country" (to quote the lowest estimate I have seen). This eliminated area "supports a stand of timber estimated at six billion board feet." The most conservative surmise puts the amount of Douglas fir on this area that is *not* being made safe for posterity at 755,000,000 board feet, and Douglas fir, next to the giant sequoias, is the most magnificent tree in America. This is the same as saying that it is the second finest tree in the world. Growing with this tree of somber beauty and tragic destiny, are 282,000,000 board feet of Sitka spruce, the most valuable timber tree of the Pacific Far Northwest, and easily in second place in any region where it grows. To be sacrificed ultimately, I fear, there is a third nobleman among trees, namely 399,000,000 board feet of western juniper, that picturesque giant of old, of which Muir said, "It dies standing, and wastes insensibly out of existence like granite, the wind exerting as little control over it alive or dead as it does over a glacial boulder." Besides these three forest aristocrats, many others, notably western hemlock, the king of hemlocks anywhere in the world, may be denied permanent protection, in the quantity of three and a half million board feet. Lumbermen call them "pulp," the silver and white firs, and the mountain hemlock. Call them what you like. The crime of cutting these trees would be that they now belong to the public and in Mt. Olympus National Park they would be yours and mine forever, by every exertion that can be brought to bear. There can be only one reason that I can see for not making a park of them and that is that somebody, sooner or later, expects to make his pile by cutting them down. His pile will vanish into his bank account. All you and I will see will be a sawdust pile, mountain high.

I might add that the figures quoted above are far more conservative than those of some other estimates. But I am actually accepting the figures of "the opposition" and I say that without dispute; the case for conservation of such a magnificent stand of valuable and beautiful forest can be safely founded on them. I believe this stand should become part of a national park.

Until I roused myself up to learn something about it, I had no faintest notion what difference it made whether trees are in "national forests" or "national parks." I find that most people I talk to don't know, either—even the sort of men who make it a point of pride to vote intelligently, to distinguish accurately between every shade of Republican, every sect of Democrat. The most important practical distinction is this: that most government timber lands can, at official discretion and without legislation, be released from public ownership to private ownership. But once a forest becomes a national park, only a special act of Congress can ever wrest it from us.

This is not to say that the national forest services mismanage their lands; on the contrary, they plant, they fight fire; they control cutting and grazing. They build up abused, burned-over or decadent forests into fine condition. They make forests where none were before.

But in a national park there is neither cutting nor grazing except by wild animals. A national park holds its groves sacred and inviolate to posterity. Virgin stands, forest beauty that brings health and inspiration to the American people, superb timber reserves needing no reforestation, are appropriate to administration by the National Park Service. And that is why some branches of the lumber industry rage at its very name, and make incantations of hate in the Senate lobbies. Do you let them do all the talking? Do you *really* care what becomes of our national heritage of trees? Or do you just frame Kilmer's *Trees* and hang it over your desk, and let the snarling sawmills sweep through the forests of your own state, without knowing whether that timber was pried out of public ownership, or whether it is being cut scientifically and with proper regard to the future?

This country, these United States, are our home, all the home we have, or want. Within their border there is room for private ownership, and government ownership. This applies to our forests as to other holdings and other industries. American democracy still allows for the individual voice and the voice of the whole people. The whole people so fought for, and so wrought this nation that its wealth and its beauty should be the good of all. The patriots, the pioneers, the statesmen, the women at their mighty unsung task of giving birth, of upbringing, the patient, underpaid educators at their task of civilizing, did not give their efforts and their years to have this country razed of its groves, its woods and templed hills. What are those temples, if they are not God's own—your trees? □



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Bin Ramke

# THE SMALL-GAME HUNTER

I

The possum, when you kill her, turns
up a soft belly, cold as Grandma's face,
the cheek she turns to kiss, soft and
dying; I kiss, then

walk on the marsh, quiet
with a black dog and a gun. We listen
through our feet:
the hunter hears with each step
the first scatter
of paws or wing's
shiver over ground.

Caught flesh is cold to touch, soon old.
Squirrel, quail, possum, rat—
I have touched the last beat
or two of heart
through fur or feather but lost
the heat, their touch is air and earth.

II

Grandma's old house burned:
her walls, her bed, her own dry flesh,
all became fine tinder,
then a fragrant dust

There was a hunter's sky
and she was very old:
the mourners talked of other things:
one said: "I am in love again, she plays
fine chess in bed." Another "Will it rain
forever?" And her grandson, in his
hunter's way: "I've never felt
the beating heart
of game I could not kill."



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# NATURE'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

WILLIAM O. DOUGLAS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY JOSEPH W. MEEKER

Laws are made by human beings to regulate human behavior. We also use the word *law*, however, to designate basic processes of nature, like the law of gravity or the laws of thermodynamics. Human law and natural law are different, we usually assume, in that judicial laws are human judgments about how humans should conduct their affairs, while natural laws simply describe how nature works without our intervention. When these two kinds of law intermingle, as when human laws are applied to the management of natural environments, nature generally loses its case.

Nature's right to the protection of its own laws was affirmed in a significant Supreme Court opinion written in 1972 by Justice William O. Douglas. It was a dissenting opinion, so it lacks the prestige of Supreme Court approval, but it represents a major advance in American jurisprudence and perhaps a turning point in our inherited traditions of man-nature relationships.

Justice Douglas argued that natural ecosystems should have standing in a court of law when their internal integrities are threatened, whether or not specific human interests are involved. If the full implications of this opinion were to be widely accepted, then the ancient supposition that nature is merely the property of mankind would have to give way to a new concept of nature as a respected partner in human affairs with full rights to the preservation of its own principles even when they do not coincide with human desires.

Humans have long been at war with nature, and many war crimes have been committed. Perhaps it is time to convene an environmental Nuremberg to establish that ecocide is morally and legally as culpable as genocide. The needless disruption of biological environments poses important ethical problems which deserve at last to be recognized in our laws.

Justice Douglas rendered his opinion in the case of The Sierra Club vs. Rogers Morton, Secretary of the Interior. The case grew out of plans made by Walt Disney Enterprises to develop a huge recreational industry in a wilderness area of the California Sierras, the Mineral King Valley. The Supreme Court decision summarizes the Disney plan and the roles of the federal agencies involved:

> The final Disney plan, approved by the Forest Service in January, 1969, outlines a $35 million complex of motels, restaurants, swimming pools, parking lots, and other structures designed to accommodate 14,000 visitors daily. This complex is to be constructed on 80 acres of the valley floor under a 30-year use permit from the Forest Service. Other facilities, including ski lifts, ski trails, a cog-assisted railway, and utility installations, are to be constructed on the mountain slopes and in other parts of the valley under a revocable special use permit. To provide access to the resort, the State of California proposes to construct a highway 20 miles in length. A section of this road would traverse Sequoia National Park, as would a proposed high-voltage power line needed to provide electricity for the resort. Both the highway and the power line require the approval of the Department of the Interior, which is entrusted with the preservation and maintenance of the national parks.

The Sierra Club tried to block this development in the courts, but its petition was denied. When the case at last reached the Supreme Court in 1972, the central issue was whether the Sierra Club enjoyed "standing" in the legal sense: that is, whether it could show that the Club or its members would be injured by Disney's plans for Mineral King. The majority opinion, delivered by Justice Stewart, denied the Sierra Club petition as follows:

> The Sierra Club failed to allege that it or its members would be affected in any of their activities or pastimes by the Disney development. Nowhere in the pleadings or affidavits did the Club state that its members use Mineral King for any purpose, much less that they use it in any way that would be significantly affected by the proposed actions of the respondents.

The case was thus decided solely on the basis of the human business interests involved, and on the formal manner of their representation before the Court. Since the Sierra Club did not prove that it would be adversely affected by the Disney operation, it had no right to protest.

In his dissenting opinion, Justice Douglas considers the tricky question of legal standing as it applies to environ-



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**"Suits in the names of corporations are taken for granted. So it should be as respects valleys, alpine meadows, rivers, lakes . . ."**

mental issues, and proposes a new approach to environmental law. His statement is reproduced here in full, edited only to minimize technical legal language and to incorporate into its text some of the relevant examples which appeared as footnotes in the official version.

## SIERRA CLUB VS. ROGERS C. B. MORTON SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR April 19, 1972

MR. JUSTICE DOUGLAS, dissenting.

The critical question of "standing" would be simplified and also put neatly in focus if we fashioned a federal rule that allowed environmental issues to be litigated before federal agencies or federal courts in the name of the inanimate object about to be despoiled, defaced, or invaded by roads and bulldozers and where injury is the subject of public outrage. Contemporary public concern for protecting nature's ecological equilibrium should lead to the conferral of standing upon environmental objects to sue for their own preservation. This suit would therefore be more properly labeled as *Mineral King* v. *Morton.*

Inanimate objects are sometimes parties in litigation. A ship has a legal personality, a fiction found useful for maritime purposes. The corporation sole—a creature of ecclesiastical law—is an acceptable adversary and large fortunes ride on its cases. At common law, an office holder, such as a priest or the King and his successors constituted a corporation sole, a legal entity distinct from the personality which managed it. Rights and duties were deemed to adhere to this device rather than to the office holder in order to provide continuity after the latter retired. The notion is occasionally revived by American courts. The ordinary corporation is a "person" for purposes of the adjudicatory processes, whether it represents proprietary, spiritual, aesthetic, or charitable causes. Early jurists considered the conventional corporation to be a highly artificial entity. Lord Coke opined that a corporation's creation "rests only in intendment and consideration of the law." Mr. Chief Justice Marshall added that the device is "an artificial being, invisible, intangible, and existing only in contemplation of law." Today suits in the names of corporations are taken for granted.

So it should be as respects valleys, alpine meadows, rivers, lakes, estuaries, beaches, ridges, groves of trees, swampland, or even air that feels the destructive pressures of modern technology and modern life. The river, for example, is the living symbol of all the life it sustains or nourishes—fish, aquatic insects, water ouzels, otter, fisher, deer, elk, bear, and all other animals, including man, who are dependent on it or who enjoy it for its sight, its sound, or its life. The river as plaintiff speaks for the ecological unit of life that is part of it. Those people who have a meaningful relation to that body of water—whether it be a fisherman, a canoeist, a zoologist, or a logger—must be able to speak for the values which the river represents and which are threatened with destruction.

I do not know Mineral King. I have never seen it nor travelled it, though I have seen articles describing its proposed "development." Although in the past Mineral King Valley has annually supplied about 70,000 visitor-days of simpler and more rustic forms of recreation—hiking, camping and skiing (without lifts)—the Forest Service in 1949 and again in 1965 invited developers to submit proposals to "improve" the Valley for resort use. Walt Disney Productions won the competition and transformed the Service's idea into a mammoth project 10 times its originally proposed dimensions. For example, while the Forest Service prospectus called for an investment of at least $3 million and a sleeping capacity of at least 100, Disney will spend $35.3 million and will bed down 3300 persons by 1978. Disney also plans a nine-level parking structure with two supplemental lots for automobiles, 10 restaurants and 20 ski lifts. The Service's annual license revenue is hitched to Disney's profits. Under Disneys' projections, the Valley will be forced to accommodate a tourist population twice as dense as that in Yosemite Valley on a busy day. And, although Disney has bought up much of the private land near the project, another commercial firm plans to transform an adjoining 160-acre parcel into a



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"piggyback" resort complex, further adding to the volume of human activity the Valley must endure. The Sierra Club in its complaint alleges that "One of the principal purposes of the Sierra Club is to protect and conserve the national resources of the Sierra Nevada Mountains." The District Court held that this uncontested allegation made the Sierra Club "sufficiently aggrieved" to have "standing" to sue on behalf of Mineral King.

Mineral King is doubtless like other wonders of the Sierra Nevada such as Tuolumne Meadows and the John Muir Trail. Those who hike it, fish it, hunt it, camp in it, or frequent it, or visit it merely to sit in solitude and wonderment are legitimate spokesmen for it, whether they may be a few or many. Those who have that intimate relation with the inanimate object about to be injured, polluted, or otherwise despoiled are its legitimate spokesmen.

The Solicitor General takes a wholly different approach. He considers the problem in terms of "government by the Judiciary." With all respect, the problem is to make certain that the inanimate objects, which are the very core of America's beauty, have spokesmen before they are destroyed. It is, of course, true that most of them are under the control of a federal or state agency. The standards given those agencies are usually expressed in terms of the "public interest." Yet "public interest" has so many differing shades of meaning as to be quite meaningless on the environmental front. Congress accordingly has adopted ecological standards in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, and guidelines for agency action have been provided by the Council on Environmental Quality of which Russell E. Train is Chairman.

Yet the pressures on agencies for favorable action one way or the other are enormous. The suggestion that Congress can stop action which is undesirable is true in theory; yet even Congress is too remote to give meaningful direction and its machinery is too ponderous to use very often. The federal agencies of which I speak are not venal or corrupt. But they are notoriously under the control of powerful interests who manipulate them through advisory committees, or friendly working relations, or who have that natural affinity with the agency which in time develops between the regulator and the regulated. As early as 1894, Attorney General Olney predicted that regulatory agencies might become "industry-minded," as illustrated by his forecast concerning the Interstate Commerce Commission:

> "The Commission is or can be made of great use to the railroads. It satisfies the public clamor for supervision of the railroads, at the same time that supervision is almost entirely nominal. Moreover, the older the Commission gets to be, the more likely it is to take a business and railroad view of things."

Years later a court of appeals observed, "the recurring question which has plagued public regulation of industry [is] whether the regulatory agency is unduly oriented toward the interests of the industry it is designed to regulate, rather than the public interest it is supposed to protect."

The Forest Service—one of the federal agencies behind the scheme to despoil Mineral King—has been notorious for its alignment with lumber companies, although its mandate from Congress directs it to consider the various aspects of multiple use in its supervision of the national forests. The Forest Reserve Act of 1897 imposed upon the Secretary of the Interior the duty to "preserve the [national] forests ... from destruction" by regulating their "occupancy and use." In 1905 these duties and powers were transferred to the Forest Service created within the Department of Agriculture. The phrase "occupancy and use" has been the cornerstone for the concept of "multiple use" of national forests, that is, the policy that uses other than logging were also to be taken into consideration in managing our 154 national forests. This policy was made more explicit by the 1960 Multiple Use and Sustained Yield Act which provides that competing considerations should include outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, wildlife and fish purposes. The Forest Service, influenced by powerful logging interests, has, however, paid only lip service to its multiple use mandate and has auctioned away millions of timberland acres without considering environmental or conservational interests. The importance of national forests to the construction and logging industries results from the type of lumber grown therein which is well suited to builders' needs. For example, Western acreage produces douglas fir (structural support) and ponderosa pine (plywood lamination). In order to preserve the total acreage

**"Federal agencies are not venal or corrupt, but they are notoriously under the control of powerful interests who manipulate them ..."**



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and so-called "maturity" of timber, the annual size of a Forest Service harvest is supposedly equated with expected yearly reforestation. Nevertheless, yearly cuts have increased from 5.6 billion board feet in 1950 to 13.74 billion in 1971. Forestry professionals challenge the Service's explanation that this 240% harvest increase is not really overcutting but instead has resulted from its improved management of timberlands. "Improved management" answer the critics is only a euphemism for exaggerated regrowth forecasts by the Service. Recent rises in lumber prices have caused a new round of industry pressure to auction more federally owned timber.

Aside from the issue of how much timber should be cut annually, another crucial question is *how* lumber should be harvested. Despite much criticism the Forest Service had adhered to a policy of permitting logging companies to "clearcut" tracts of auctioned acreage. "Clearcutting," somewhat analogous to strip mining, is the indiscriminate and complete shaving from the earth of all trees—regardless of size or age—often across hundreds of contiguous acres.

Of clearcutting Senator Gale McGee, a leading antagonist of Forest Service policy, complains: "The Forest Service's management policies are wreaking havoc with the environment. Soil is eroding, reforestation is neglected, if not ignored, streams are silting, and clearcutting remains a basic practice." He adds "In Wyoming . . . the Forest Service is very much nursemaid . . . to the lumber industry . . . ."

Senator Jennings Randolph offers a similar criticism of the leveling by lumber companies of large portions of the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. To investigate similar controversy surrounding the Service's management of the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana, Senator Lee Metcalf recently asked forestry professionals at the University of Montana to study local harvesting practices. The faculty group concluded that public dissatisfaction had arisen from the Forest Service's "overriding concern for sawtimber production" and its "insensitivity to the related forest uses . . . and the public interest in environmental values."

A third category of criticism results from the Service's huge backlog of delayed reforestation projects. It is true that Congress has underfunded replanting programs of the Service but it is also true that the Service and lumber companies have regularly ensured that Congress fully fund budgets requested for the Forest Service's "timber sales and management."

The voice of the inanimate object, therefore, should not be stilled. That does not mean that the judiciary takes over the managerial functions from the federal agency. It merely means that before these priceless bits of Americana (such as a valley, an alpine meadow, a river, or a lake) are forever lost or are so transformed as to be reduced to the eventual rubble of our urban environment, the voice of the existing beneficiaries of these environmental wonders should be heard. Permitting a court to appoint a representative of an inanimate object would not be significantly different from customary judicial appointments of guardians *ad litem*, executors, conservators, receivers, or counsel for indigents.

Perhaps they will not win. Perhaps the bulldozers of "progress" will plow under all the aesthetic wonders of this beautiful land. That is not the present question. The sole question is, who has standing to be heard?

Those who hike the Appalachian Trail into Sunfish Pond, New Jersey, and camp or sleep there, or run the Allagash in Maine, or climb the Guadalupes in West Texas, or who canoe and portage the Quetico Superior in Minnesota, certainly should have standing to defend those natural wonders before courts or agencies, though they live 3,000 miles away. Those who merely are caught up in environmental news or propaganda and flock to defend these waters or areas may be treated differently. That is why these environmental issues should be tendered by the inanimate object itself. Then there will be assurances that all of the forms of life which it represents will stand before the court—the pileated woodpecker as well as the coyote and bear, the lemmings as well as the trout in the streams. Those inarticulate members of the ecological group cannot speak. But those people who have so frequented the place as to know its values and wonders will be able to speak for the entire ecological community.

Ecology reflects the land ethic; and Aldo Leopold wrote in *A Sand County Almanac*, "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land."

That, as I see it, is the issue of "standing" in the present case and controversy. □

**"Permitting a court to appoint a representative of an inanimate object would not be significantly different from customary appointments of guardians . . ."**



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Richard Jackson

# GRANDMOTHER AT THE SPINNING WHEEL

Frost clings to this window
the way he used to show
me iron shavings might
cling to a piece of paper
held over a magnet.

A smudged thumbprint of
the moon rubs the pane.

When he left it was morning–
his shadow a compass needle
frozen forever at his feet.

I had nearly forgotten the roses
we pressed in this bible once–
they've turned to onion skins.
(I see the shadow of my hand
through the onion skin.)

Outside, my pie tins
strung around the garden
still keep no crows away.
Ice stretches like mica
over the road's ruts. You ask,
why do I spin this yarn?

The frost loosens on the window.
Beyond, the stars unravel.

In corners where the light hardly
reaches, the skin of darkness
begins to moult from the walls–

a spider keeps spinning,
turning the lamp's light,
webbed in your own story.



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A Story by Paul Byall

# Whispers of Lost Options

The two men were sharing a camouflage-colored poncho liner, a labyrinth of faded browns and greens, manufactured by some far-away factory out of slick waterproof nylon. It was comfortable, cool like a quilted silk bedcover, and more than large enough for both of them to lie on. The lieutenant was feeling better. He was glad to be there, glad to be lying on the beach, the sun melting his body, the rumble of the waves drowning out his thoughts, numbing his mind. The morning's incident in the town was far away, no more than a smudge on his memory, a fingerprint on a polished boot.

A solitary young girl with a long-handled basket dangling from her shoulder walked across the sand. She was selling pineapples to the Americans on the beach, but it was getting late and few were left. The lieutenant reasoned that she walked the beach every day, for her hair was bleached and streaked to shades of dark red, and her skin was tanned and dried like dark leather. Oblivious to the heat, she moved gracefully over the scorching sand. Watching her, the lieutenant wondered if she hated him.

That such questions came to mind, that he could dwell on them, was proof, he felt, that he was recovering. He had been reminding himself, until it was stamped and sealed in his mind, that he was going home soon. Keeping constantly aware of the fact seemed to help.

A harmless incident, he had let it distress him. Just when things were beginning to go well, when he had begun to think ahead again. That was the trick, he had discovered, thinking forward instead of backward. And once begun, avoiding introspection. He had been doing all right too, until the old beggar came along, sending him reeling back into himself, tossing his mind into a jumble of fragments. Why had he felt threatened?—like a paranoid thief, suspecting accusations behind every glancing eyeball. He harbored no evil schemes, no sinister plots, he had only wanted to escape for a few days, to come here and forget and lie in the sun.

The visit to the market—that was a chance he shouldn't have taken. It was there it had happened, the old man, those taunting stubs. There, where flies and soldiers mingled among the wares and produce, he had spotted the marine. A handsome young corporal with burlap-colored hair cropped down to a stubble, he looked as if he had just stepped out of a recruiting poster. Intending to ask directions to the beach, the lieutenant approached him when the old beggar squeezed in between them, appearing as suddenly as if he had sprung up out of the ground. He thrust two handless stubs into the lieutenant's face, seeming to have singled him out from among a market-full of people. Pinched and balanced between the two ugly stubs was a tiny white card that explained in English that the man was a war casualty and forced into begging for a living. The old man pushed the card at the lieutenant, displaying it like a trophy, grinning hideously and muttering Vietnamese through a toothless mouth. The lieutenant recoiled, froze. He was unable to act. Grotesquely dimpled stubs were glaring up at him, at once both pleading and accusing, mocking him like some macabre circus clown. He could only stare back in horror. What could he possibly give the poor bastard? There seemed nothing he could do.

He stood paralyzed as the marine casually stuffed a few piasters into the man's shirt pocket. The beggar turned and nodded gratefully to the marine, bobbing his head up and down as if his neck were made of string. The marine waved the man off, but the beggar persisted with the lieutenant, shoving the card back into his face.

A policeman, apparently witness to the spectacle, came over and chased the man away. The lieutanant watched as the old man scuttled off down the street.

"Sometimes you gotta give the poor sons-a-bitches something or they'll hound you to death," the marine said,

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almost apologetically. "A crippled kid followed me around for damned near an hour one time in Da Nang."

The lieutenant, anxious to change the subject, asked how to get to the beach. The marine explained that he wasn't exactly certain of the way, but that he had a pretty good idea, and he wouldn't mind going himself if the lieutenant could make room in the jeep. The lieutenant had borrowed the jeep from the local air base.

But now they were lying in the sun on this American-owned beach, sharing a poncho liner, and the vision of the beggar in the lieutenant's mind was growing dimmer. He lay on his back watching the clouds twist and swell in great billows across the sky, thinking how self-sufficient they were. They could go on without him. They needed no one to take responsibility for their activities.

The cumulus over the mountains, building up in puffs of dirty gray cotton, were, he knew, preparing themselves for a shower. This, at least, he felt certain of. A weather officer in the Air Force, he knew about clouds. Clouds, winds, temperatures, they were part of his reason for being there.

The following morning he was to return to Tan Son Nhut, to the weather station, to charts and maps and cryptic messages that rolled off the teletype machines on pale strips of cold yellow paper. He would use these things to prepare his forecasts for the bombing missions. He would brief the air-crews before take-off. He would explain the enroute and target weather, including wind forecasts for every few thousand feet from the bombing altitudes to the ground so that they could calculate when to release the bombs. It was a minor role. The war would go on without him.

He sat up. The marine was stretched out peacefully, his eyes closed under the sun glasses and his hands resting on his stomach like a meditating priest. The lieutenant's vision fixed on the shiny, pink lump that bulged out on the side of his neck. Behind the lump, hidden from view now, was a small hole, the skin puffed and puckered around it, where the bullet had bored in at an angle. The lieutenant had seen the hole earlier, on the drive out. "So they're not going to take it out?" he said.

"Guess not," the corporal replied, "not yet anyway. Maybe in a few months if it works away from the spine." He spoke without moving, except to open his eyes and tilt his head slightly toward the lieutenant. "But they want me to stick around a few days anyway. More X-rays and all that. To be sure, you know?" Then turning his face back to the sky and dropping his eyelids closed again, speaking sleepily, "It's all right by me. I'll stay here all year if they want."

"So how do you feel about it?" the lieutenant asked, wondering how he could be so casual about lying there with a piece of lead lodged in his neck.

"Well, I figure I have to trust them. They're doctors, I guess they know what they're doing."

"No, I mean how do you feel about getting shot?"

"Well," the marine chuckled, "I don't like it much. But I guess there's not much I can do about it."

"But they're sending you back to your unit, doesn't that bother you?"

"Not much I can do about that either."

"Well," the lieutenant said trying to sound amusing, "so you're a hero," and remembered a newspaper article he had read where someone had claimed that the only legitimate heroes of this war were the young men who had run away to Canada. He wondered what the marine would say to that. It was probably true, he thought, but what could that knowledge benefit either of them now?—knowledge that did not admit of action.

"I guess going back ain't so bad. It don't hurt much. Not unless I get bumped pretty hard. I mean a lotta guys got it a lot worse."

He was getting sticky, drenched in sweat. It was seeping up out of his pores like a transparent plasma, sopping his body, matting the hair on his arms, legs, and chest. It beaded up on his forehead and rolled down into his eyes, burning them. He pulled himself up off the poncho liner and traipsed toward the water.

He plunged into a wave, dove deep beneath the surface, escaping the sultry air, submerging himself into a cool, tranquil, underwater world. He swam along the bottom, occasionally brushing against the sand with his arms and abdomen. When his lungs began to ache, he relaxed and let the sea buoy him up to the surface. He lay floating on his back, the undulating pitch of the waves rocking him back and forth. He watched the clouds hover over him. They were beginning to sprout out their anvil tops.

The thought of returning to duty, to the weather station, was beginning to weigh on him. It seemed as if he had done this all before, this returning. A thousand times now, and the thought of repeating the routine once more bore down insufferably. He envisioned himself hoisting his duffel bag ritualistically onto the hard, metal deck of the helicopter, its big blade whirling around, beating a familiar rhythm. He could picture himself standing before the air-crews, his voice strong, confident, professional. Machine-like? Maybe that was what it was about the marine: He didn't see himself as a toy to be wound or a button to be pushed—or he didn't mind. He seemed to stand remote and untouched behind a shield of innocence. Without that shield, the lieutenant thought, he would be left naked and exposed to all the shrouded whispers that shadow the clamor of bombs and cannons.

But he was lapsing again. He would have to be careful. It was precisely this sort of slipping back into himself he needed to guard against. Later. Later there would be time for all of this, this analyzing. When he was free again and there were no more uniforms or regulations to restrict his choices. He rolled over in the water and rode the waves back to shore.

The marine, propped up on one elbow, was mopping his face with a towel when the lieutenant came panting up. "What do you say we start back?" he said, offering the towel to the lieutenant.

The lieutenant ruffled the towel over his hair and dropped down on the poncho liner, letting his head fall back with a bump. "Okay, in a few minutes," he said, breathing heavily.



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For some time they were still and then the beach seemed to have grown quiet, the sound of the waves more distant. "Maybe we should be going now," the marine said. "Better not to be on the road at night."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," he said, and they gathered up their things, slipping into their fatigues and boots, and started off across the beach. The loose sand tugged at their boots, making their steps heavy.

They crossed the road and walked along beside a tall fence with barbed wire strung across the top. There was an open gate in the fence with a sign above it that read, U. S. ARMY RECREATION CENTER – MILITARY PERSONNEL AND GUESTS ONLY. A few dark-haired children were loitering outside, gaping through the fence at the G. I.s sitting around on a large, concrete patio. But most of the G. I.s were leaving now, some of them with young girls. The girls were all colorfully decked-out in eye-shadow and lipstick and stylish mod clothes, hip-huggers and mini-skirts and elaborate Western hair-dos.

"Where do they get the girls?" the marine asked.

"Mostly they buy them out of the bars in town."

"Oh," he said, lifting his head as if suddenly enlightened. His eyes scanned them as they flounced past and fixed momentarily on a pretty one who smiled up at him.

They walked on toward the jeep, only a few yards away now, parked off the side of the road. Then the lieutenant spotted him again—the old beggar. He was standing just beyond the jeep, hunched over with his elbows crimped together, flashing his card at the passing soldiers. The lieutenant hurried, tried to reach the jeep before the man could see him. He couldn't chance another confrontation. Not with those stubs—intimidating dimpled eyes of furrowed and puckered skin that squinted up at him as if it were all some grisly joke. He felt panic rising up from some deep hollow inside. He could not put hands back on those useless stubs; what did they expect from him?

"Hey, what's the hurry?" the marine said, still watching the girls.

"I thought you wanted to get back," he said, feeling his voice quiver.

They climbed into the jeep, safe now, tucked securely behind a brown metal barrier.

They sped down the road, along the coast. Off on the ocean, the late afternoon sun cast sparkling sequins on the water. Stunted palms sprouted up out of the sand, lining the beach like a neat row of tall pineapples. It would be night before they got back.

The lieutenant tried to reorient his mind, to get some focus on his thoughts. They seemed to be spinning through his head in involuntary and incoherent spasms. Nothing seemed to be working. What was going wrong?

After all, he thought, I am only a noncombatant. Just a spectator—not really involved at all. Yet he felt no relief. His mind was still addled. He looked to the marine—for reassurance?—who was slumped down in the seat with his fatigue cap pulled down over his eyes. Was he asleep? Was that possible? No, he saw an arm move. He was only resting. Just slouched down there resting peacefully with a tiny missile sunk deep into his neck and the skin stretched tight and pink and ugly around the lump.

It was all beginning to seem like some cruel masque, a pantomime of wounded soldiers, armless beggars, and young girls that clung to the sleeves of military jackets or sold pineapples on the beach. But where did he fit into this charade? What did any of this have to do with him? What did it mean to be cruising down this coastal highway in a military jeep while the scenario—a death scenario—continued all around. Perhaps just over one of those hills that stretched back from the sea, muddy-brown like giant tents, bullets were screaming through the air; bodies were lying in the mud, holes burned wet and sticky through their heads; bombs were bursting, splintering off arms and legs, spraying out bits of human flesh, scattering it over the ground like birdseed.

The road turned off toward the town, and the terrain changed from barren sand to thickly weeded red earth. They passed a caravan of Army trucks that followed each other like links of a giant centipede. The marine, watching the trucks fall away as they breezed past, said, "I wonder if this war will ever be over." The lieutenant was tempted to reply, might have a day ago, that it would be over for *him* when he left. But now all that seemed an illusion.

They drove through the town, watching it empty itself of the day's crowd of ambling and darting little bodies. They were closing themselves in behind the bolted doors and barred windows of leaning rickety houses and adobe-walled buildings. They passed the market place and the lieutenant noted the spot where the beggar had first confronted them. They drove past the bars and the black-market shops, and then the town was behind them and the road stretched ahead between fields of rice-pocked water. The water, muddy and still, spread out quietly in enormous puddles on both sides of the road like a lake of death.

Ahead on the road, blending into the dull, smoky, browns and grays of the muddy fields and fading sky, was another truck. Its canvas top was rolled down, exposing wooden side gates and four soldiers sprawled out in the back. They were wearing their helmets and holding M-16 rifles. One of them was trying to sleep and his chin bounced up and down on his chest as the truck rolled along.

Then, suddenly, a short solitary *crack*! Like a thunderbolt, it shattered the air into reverberating echoes. Startled, the lieutenant watched as the soldiers in the truck ahead scrambled to flatten their bodies to the floor. Two of them poked their rifles through the side gates, and bursts of flashing light spurted from the barrels.

Jamming the accelerator to the floor, the lieutenant thought he saw a huddled figure out in the murky field tumble over and disappear beneath the stalks of rice.

They raced on for a few hundred yards, but it was quiet again, and the lieutenant slowed the jeep down and pulled it off the road. "Hey, don't stop! Keep going!" the marine warned, crouched down in his seat.

"Listen, it's quiet. If there was anybody else out there they'd be shooting by now."

"So what are you stopping for?" the marine said.

"I thought I saw somebody fall out there. He might still be alive."

The marine stared at him, puzzled, then shrugged, and



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they backed the jeep up, and the lieutenant climbed down. "You know this is not too smart." the marine said as the lieutenant started off toward the water. The lieutenant turned but didn't say anything, and then splashed into the muddy water, feeling his boots sink into the muck and the water slosh up on his pant legs. He eased his way through the mud. He was trembling, could feel the tremors pass through his body and the weak, wobbly rubber in his legs. He made it up to where the man was lying, sprawled out on his side, with his face half submerged in water. The man was muttering in groans and muted shrieks through a mouth pulsing out bubbles of blood and muddy water. The lieutenant rolled him over, and blood poured out of a hole in the side of his chest, turning the water all around a dull pink. Even through its contorted, twisted expression, the face was clearly that of a boy.

He picked him up, surprised at the weight. He carried the boy like an injured puppy, but it was dark now and he had to pick his steps through the marshy water like a blind man. He could feel the blood spilling out onto his hand where he grasped the boy under the arm. The blood was trickling over his hand and running down his arm all the way to his elbow. It crawled on his skin like warm, sticky syrup. It began to soak through his field jacket, pasting his undershirt to his chest until it clung and sucked at his skin like a leech. He tried to hurry.

He stepped in a hole, stumbled, fell. He fell headlong across the boy. Wet and muddy, he raised himself to his knees and felt for the boy's pulse. In his hand, the wrist was limp and spongy. Still. He sat kneeling before the boy, wiping his hands on his thighs, and staring down at the shadowed face, the vacant black eyes. He could feel blood all over him now, all over his chest and arms and neck. He held his hands to his eyes, examined them closely. Blood was already beginning to dry on his fingers, caking up under the nails and in the creases.

In the morning the lieutenant didn't go to the launch pad where the choppers lifted off. Instead he packed his bags and hitched a ride to town. He asked to be dropped off at the hotel, and there he got a room. The man behind the desk, spotting his rank, pondered the price momentarily and declared that the room would be sixteen dollars. Without arguing the lieutenant handed over the money, took the key, and climbed the stairs.

The room was hot and stuffy, and the lazy fan that twirled overhead offered little comfort. He was tired. He felt hollow, drained empty, sapped of energy. He was too tired to wonder or worry or struggle with his thoughts. He stripped off his uniform and lay on the bed in his underwear, watching the fan spin monotonously from the ceiling.

After a while he got up and reached into his bag and withdrew a pair of civilian slacks and a clean T-shirt. He showered, changed into the clean clothes, and went back down the stairs. He walked to the market place, bought a pineapple and returned to his room. He took a long-bladed knife from his bag and sliced the pineapple into strips. He sat on the bed in his civilian clothes, eating the pineapple and wondering how long it might be before they came for him. □

Gary Gildner

## DREAMS

She whispers my dreams
need to rise like bubbles,
like the bubbles a fish
sends up when it's lost
in thought. I'm caught—
I can't resist her

freckles and we kiss.
We pick out honey, bread,
we spend the summer at my place.
Oh it all works out! We pool
our dimes for Tide and
dry our underwear together.

We watch the Angels split
against the Brewers, buy a
Shostakovitch, oh we slip
inside a church and hear
each other's childhoods,
and summer's over.

Fall comes on, we fall
in love, and then it's Christmas!,
January . . . March
bites us through our mackinaws.
We thaw,
we say our vows,

we name our dances
after children, after work
we walk around the block
and greet our neighbors;
one by one they make the evening
paper, leaving tiny nest eggs

to a favorite bird or cat.
Something's funny,
something's splitting in our sides.
We lie down by the lake
and close our eyes;
our dreams are falling,
breaking on the water like applause.



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## 1.

clouds, wind
a man's smile and
a hole
in the center of me

a joke laughed at
like paper in the wind

i am beautiful
here on the grass
the dandelions have always been yellow
Is beauty directed somewhere will it
bump up against something, or
be alone
like a leaf

falling

in a forest with a bottomless valley
never to land on

Pat O'Donnell

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# LESSONS

## 2.

about you,
full-blown and clear in the setting sun,
the morning sun, the evening light–
penetrates
so far into those dim,
those close and dusky recesses
(which, until just now, seemed to be
wonderfully mysterious,
covered and unlit angles,
known intimately by only
Myself, or no one)

your light-clear eyes,
your cool wind smile–
No, a cold wind, an icy wind wide-awake–
emptied of desires, they can see
the guilt, the hidden fears and pains
And beyond, beyond.

the caverns are blown open, pierced open
your sunlight pours in, cold air, no mercy,
Fresh. fresh. Gasp, I gasp inside to see you.

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A STORY BY IRA SADOFF

# *The Books That Will Change Your Life*

Two men are sitting and drinking in a cafe, making pleasant conversation; but they both have had too much to drink and begin to argue. "Now you're just grasping at straws, Brodsky," the first man says. "This is another example of how you shoot your mouth off to hear the sound of your own voice."

"So I'm shooting my mouth off," Brodsky smiles. "Just take a look at this," he says, pulling a book out from his pocket. "It's right here in black and white. And I quote, 'In 1645 a man's life was saved by the sting of a bee.' "

"Let me see that." The other man, whose name is Janover, grabs the book out of Brodsky's hand and reads the quotation for himself. "I don't believe it," he says.

"I believe you owe me a drink," Brodsky says.

Janover orders two whiskies and the men drink in silence. Brodsky leans back in his chair. "You ought to read some more books, Janover; you know what they say: 'Books will improve your mind.' Why there are even some books that will change your life. Believe me."

"I suppose now you're going to tell me that reading about a bee sting is going to change the course of my entire life."

"Of course not, you idiot. Now here," Brodsky says, scribbling on a napkin, "are some books that can change your life."

Although Janover feels there is nothing wrong with his life as it is, he can find no real objection to changing it, so he puts Brodsky's list in his pocket and the next day he takes some of the books out of the library. But when he gets home he finds reading very difficult, he cannot sit still in one place for very long; he is easily distracted, by the voices of his neighbors, the humming of the refrigerator, the ticking of his watch. He finds that he needs absolute silence in order to read, and one night when Brodsky comes over to his apartment to talk about the books, Janover tells him, "I'm in the middle of a very important passage, and I'm afraid that if I talk to you tonight I'll never regain my power of concentration. I don't want to hurt your feelings, but would you mind coming back later? I'm sure you understand, and that you'd rather have me be honest with you."

Brodsky nods. "I can see you are already beginning to learn from books," he says and leaves.

Gradually it gets easier for him to spend his time reading, and soon he has an urge to talk to his friends at work about the books he has been reading. But as soon as he brings up the subject of books he finds that his friends become bored, they begin to look over his shoulder while he is speaking with them. And sometimes he gets the feeling they think that he is trying to impress them with his intelligence. He cannot understand this hostility to books, and he begins to wonder, what *does* interest his friends, what *do* they like to talk about? The man who sits at the desk next to his has been married for fifteen years, yet all he seems to talk about is sex: the women who pass them by in the hallways, the size of their breasts and the shape of their legs, or the beautiful women he has seen in the movies, how he would like to go to bed with all of them. What seems so strange to Janover is that no one else in the office finds this behavior unusual, certainly not as unusual as his discussion of books.

He now finds that most of the people he works with have their own idiosyncrasies and strange interests, like the secretary who constantly looks at herself in the mirror, the elevator operator who likes to talk to everyone even when he has nothing to say (and he wonders why a man who spends his entire day indoors would have such an interest in the weather), and his employer, who always maintains a distance between himself and his employees, even at social gatherings like office parties. And at the annual office party Janover notices that despite the fact that everybody tries to act naturally with everybody else, despite all their little jokes and flirtations, they are all reserved and closed, they are all guarded and uncomfortable. Janover finds that strangely his friends behave like the people he reads about in social psychology books.

There is one woman, though, who is willing to talk to him about books. She appears to be more intelligent than the others and she holds a very responsible position in the company. When he mentions a book to her she goes home and reads the book; sometimes she will even ask him questions about it the very next day. Occasionally she suggests a book for him to read, and most often it will be a difficult book of philosophy, like Spinoza or Kant. But no matter how difficult the book he tries to read it, not only because he would not like to displease her, but also because he always keeps in mind what Brodsky has told him about how books could change his life.

One night, because he is lonely and she has missed her train, they have dinner together. He takes her to his apartment for a drink and she admires the books on his shelf. "It is not often you find someone who reads such *good* books," she says.

"I am really just beginning," he says.

"Ah, but that is the greatest pleasure by far."

All night they talk about books; he tells her the strange story of how he became interested in books, and she tells him how important books are in her life, how she cannot imagine a life without books. He tells her he thinks he may be beginning to understand what she means. They end up in bed together. She tells him that it is foolish for them to declare their love for each other. He says nothing. The next morning they go to work together; they are friendly and

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*IRA SADOFF has been represented in the* NAR *as poet; other fiction has been in* TRI-QUARTERLY, IOWA REVIEW, *and* TRANSATLANTIC REVIEW.



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polite to each other but neither acts as though anything has changed between them. That night he goes home to read a book he has seen reviewed favorably in the Sunday paper. It is a long book, and the next day he does not mention the book to the woman because he has already learned how people talk foolishly about books they have not finished, how sometimes they talk about books they have not read at all. A few nights later, when he is still in the middle of the book, he gets a phone call. It is from the woman and she is very disturbed and he cannot finish the book. He does meaning of commitment," and she hangs up the phone. He is very distrubed and he cannot finish the book. He does not know if he should call her up to apologize, he does not understand what is expected of him. He cannot even decide if what she has said is true. One thing he has already learned from books is that events have many points of view, many of them contradictory, and that no one way of looking at something is the right way. One philosopher thinks this is the beauty, the multifariousness of human life, but Janover just finds it confusing. For the first time in his life he is unable to sleep.

When he gets to work the next day he is tired and irritable, and for the first time he begins to realize how much he hates his work, not only because there is nobody he can talk to, but also because of the drudgery of the job itself. He wonders how he has made it this long without being bored to death. All day he sits at his desk with tens of other men like him, and draws plans for buildings which he never gets to see and for the most part are never actually built. In the afternoon his back begins to hurt him from sitting in one place too long, he can hardly keep his eyes open, his pencil seems to guide itself along the paper. He asks the man next to him how he is able to keep at a job like this for all these years.

"It's a job not much worse than any other job," he answers.

"You say that as though it made no difference what you did with your life."

"Where did you read that," the man says, "in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica?*"

Janover tries to find out from the others if they share his view of their jobs, but nobody is sympathetic. They give him responses like, "If you hate it so much why don't you just quit and leave us alone?" or "What do you intend to eat, the pages from the great books?"

Soon he is totally without friends at work. People laugh at him, call him the Philosopher King, or the Great Buddha. He wants desperately to quit, but he knows, as much as he hates to admit it, that while it would be easy enough for him to quit this job, it would be far more difficult for him to a find a job that would be more rewarding. He would not even know where to start looking. And of course he would have no way to pay his rent or buy food and clothing or even books. He thinks fleetingly of leaving the country, of living self-sufficiently as Thoreau had done; it even crosses his mind that someday he may learn enough to write his own books. But he is realistic enough to realize that these are romantic dreams, dreams without substance.

He visits Brodsky and explains his dilemma. He says he does not know how much longer he can face these people, that it gets more and more difficult to get up in the morning to go to work. Brodsky says that this is only to be expected, that "once you get to know people, that is *really* know them, more often than not they turn out to be boring and vicious."

"Then what do you do for friends?" Janover asks.

"My books are my friends."

"I don't find that very consoling."

"You're not supposed to find it consoling," Brodsky says, "you're only supposed to learn to live with it. Look, the main thing is, your time is valuable and you shouldn't waste it even thinking about those people."

Janover has already read about the meaning of time, so he takes Brodsky's advice seriously. He resolves, as he has read in books of Eastern Philosophy, not to waste his time with the petty business of everyday life; he will go to his job mechanically and without thought, he will speak only when spoken to, he will ignore the ironies of his colleagues. He will use his time wisely, waking up an hour earlier than usual so he can read in the morning; he will take a book with him on the train to and from work. He sells his television and radio and most of his furniture except for a bed, a comfortable chair, two lamps and a large desk. He takes many more books out of the library at one time, but the more he reads the more he realizes that some books are more important than others, that there is not enough time to read all the good books in the world, so sometimes he sits at his desk for hours at a time with his books piled up in front of him; he makes lists of the books he must read first, and as he begins to read he always wonders if the book is worth his time, or would it be better to put it down and begin another, more important book. He becomes restless, and this consciousness of time extends to his relationships with other people. Whenever he speaks to someone he wonders if what the person is saying is worth listening to, or is the person just chattering idly, without purpose? Should he excuse himself and say he has to leave? Once while he is waiting for his train a woman comes up to him and says, "I see you are reading Martin Buber. He's one of my favorite philosophers." As soon as she opens her mouth a thousand thoughts cross Janover's mind at once: Is her flippant remark indicative of her superficiality or does it reflect some energy or openness about her? Is she sincerely interested in Buber, or is she trying to pick him up? Or is he just projecting that onto her motivation because she is a reasonably attractive woman? With all these contradictory thoughts going through his mind he cannot respond to her at all, he cannot even open his mouth. He watches her smile turn slowly to a frown. "What chapter are you on?" she finally asks, trying to cover up her embarrassment. It is so incredibly involved yet so incredibly simple, nothing has actually happened, yet all he can say is, "I have not begun it yet," and walk away.

But the experience shakes him badly. When he gets home he cannot decide what to eat, where to sit, or whether or not he should change his clothes. He paces around his apartment, and although there is nothing to distract him from reading, he wishes there were. He listens for the voices



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of his neighbors, but he hears nothing. He realizes, in fact, that he has not heard them in weeks, that perhaps something has happened to them; perhaps they have separated, or perhaps they have been hurt. Suppose he should open their door and find them lying dead on the floor? He knows this thought is totally irrational, but he has an urge to call the police. He will not let himself call but the urge does not go away. Finally he has to leave his apartment. He takes a book to the library because he thinks at least there will be other people there, and he will be able to hear their voices; and even if their voices are only murmurs they will be the murmurs of human noise.

And so he spends most of his free time reading in the library. After a time he notices that there is a core of people who spend a great deal of time in the library; he wonders if they have fled from their apartments as well. Most of them are either students or elderly people who read current periodicals, although many of them sleep in their chairs for several hours at a time. The library is always too warm, and it gives off the musty odor of old books; even Janover finds it very conducive to sleep. Soon he is able to sleep away entire Saturday afternoons in the library.

He begins to recognize individual faces, and if he passes some of the "regulars" on the way to the reference room, they nod at him. The old men walk so slowly it seems as though they are not moving at all, as if perhaps they are only shadows or apparitions. He is afraid to bump into them.

One day on the train he recognizes an old man he has seen several times in the library. He cannot get over how different the man looks under the fluorescent lights of the train, how his wrinkles seem deeper, how his thick glasses make his eyes look like large dark stones, and how the color of his skin almost gives off a yellow light. He cannot keep his eyes off the man. He wonders, what does he do with his time when he is not in the library? Finally the man notices him and gives him a nod not unlike the recognition he would receive in the library. The man comes over and sits next to him. "Is that Kierkegaard you're reading? Very good," he says. "Yes, Kierkegaard could have been one of our greatest thinkers had it not been for his deep religious need." Janover does not wish to speak; more than anything else he wants to keep from making a fool of himself. Yet he knows that if he says nothing the man will certainly think him a fool. "Perhaps that is true," he says, "but it must also be said that this need was a source of inspiration to him." The old man smiles. "Quite right," he says, and goes on to say something Janover cannot quite hear. He is so relieved that he has not said something idiotic he can think of nothing else. He resolves, however, to try to avoid the man in the future.

In point of fact, he cannot. Every day the man takes the train to the library, which is only one stop before Janover's office building. And the old man sits next to him every morning, making polite conversation and commenting on the books that Janover reads. Janover finds out the man is a retired university professor named Bednarski, who does research in the library for a monograph concerning Hegel's indebtedness to the ideas of Locke and Newton. He is always friendly to Janover on the train, but if they meet in the library they nod at each other as if they had never spoken.

One day on the train the Professor asks Janover if he is going to the lecture that evening at the library.

"What lecture is that?"

"It is part of the series the library sponsors. Tonight a very important scholar is going to speak about 'The Word as Deed.' It should prove interesting."

"That does sound interesting. Perhaps I will go."

"And afterwards I am having a little get-together at our house for the speaker and some of my friends. I would be delighted if you'd come too."

Reluctantly Janover agrees to come. He convinces himself that, after all, this is what he has been seeking all along, an opportunity to talk to interesting people about books. The Professor writes his address down on a scrap of paper and hands it to Janover.

But at the lecture Janover finds that he cannot sit still. He tries to take notes on the points he would like to discuss at the Professor's house, but he cannot keep his mind clear, he cannot concentrate. Afterwards he applauds when the speaker finishes his talk, but really he wishes the talk would go on all night.

When he gets to the house he is greeted by the Professor's wife, a heavy old woman who retires immediately into the bedroom with his coat. The living room gives off the odor of old furniture, and there are so many bookshelves filled with books he cannot make out the color of the walls. He wonders why Bednarski ever has to go to the library. Most of the people at the party are gathered around the speaker, and the noise in the room is lively, almost agitated. A man comes up to Janover and introduces himself as Jeffrey Fetler. He says he has seen Janover at the library many times, and he is pleased to meet him. When there is a lull in the conversation Fetler asks, "And what did you think of the lecture, Mr. Janover?"

"I enjoyed it very much," he says, but when he sees that the man is waiting for him to say more he adds, "Still, I suppose I cannot get used to the idea of the word as actually being a deed, a kind of action."

"That is because the man did such a superficial job; from what I could tell, all he did was re-name all the old Aristotelian principles with technical jargon and pass them off as his own ideas."

"Excuse me," another man joins in and faces Janover, "but I couldn't help but overhear what you were saying. So you were not convinced tonight, eh?"

"Me?" Janover asks. "No, I didn't say that. I only said that the concept was foreign to me, that's. . ."

"Then you must be an existentialist."

"No, actually I part from the existentialists with Wittgenstein." It feels good to Janover to say something like this, almost as if identifying his own ideas with an important man lends validity to what he is saying. He begins to feel that perhaps he has a chance to make it through the evening without going through a disaster.

"But Wittgenstein was such a nasty old man, and doesn't have that much to say on this subject. Have you read Langer? Or Pascal? Now there's a man who has something to say about the meaning of words."



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"No, I haven't read either of those men. I just haven't had the time. My work keeps me so busy."

"Langer happens to be a woman. And you haven't even read Pascal? Really I don't see how you could have gotten anything out of this evening without knowing what Pascal had to say on the subject," Fetler exclaims.

The other man, trying to tone down the conversation, says, "Really, Fetler, Pascal is your own hobby horse, you must admit. Tell me, Mr. Janover, what kind of work is it that you do?"

"I work in an office."

"Yes, but what kind of office?"

"In an architect's office," he says reluctantly. "I make mechanical drawings."

"That sounds awfully dull. No wonder you haven't read very much."

"Tell me, then," Fetler interjects, "have you read Dewey? Or don't you think instrumentalism would lend credence to this man's argument?"

"I couldn't say. I don't know that much about Dewey. As I've been saying, I haven't had much time."

"Well, you've got to make time. What do you do with your time anyway, waste it reading Wittgenstein?"

"No, of course not."

"Then where do you get off criticizing the speaker? Surely you can't buy all that garbage by Heidegger, can you?"

"I have not read Heidegger either."

"And you call yourself an existentialist. Why you're nothing but an intellectual charlatan. Bednarski should throw you right out the door."

Janover's head is spinning. He feels smaller and more stupid than the day that Brodsky told him you could save a man's life with the sting of a bee. His first impulse is to run over to Brodsky's house and choke him to death. What right did he have to spread his unhappiness to others? He knows that wish is as irrational as his desire to call the police, but he cannot tame the urge. He runs over to Bednarski and apologizes for leaving so early but he says that he has suddenly become ill, he is so dizzy he can hardly walk.

When he gets home to his desk he tries to read but he cannot. He looks around at his apartment, but except for the stacks of books coming up from the floor his apartment is empty. So this is how he has changed. And if books have changed the lives of the men at the party, and the old men at the library, then who would wish to change his life? What could their lives have been like before? He does not know. And as he sits at his desk which is filled with paper, he cannot remember what his own life was like before that night with Brodsky, or if he even had a life. And now he is full of anger, toward the men at the party, toward Brodsky for ruining his life, and most of all he feels an uncontrollable anger toward all human beings and the horrible way they treat each other. He does not like feeling this way but he is as powerless to change the feeling as he is powerless to influence the behavior of others. He wants to read to take his mind off what has happened to him, but he cannot bring himself to open a book. And what is most frightening to him, what he cannot get out of his mind, is the truth of what the woman who once slept with him had said, that no matter what else was in his future, no matter what he would try to do with his life, he could not imagine a life without books. □

## David Evans

## AFTER PLAY, WALKING HOME, THROWING THINGS UP AT THE BATS IN THE DARKENING SKY

gripping the air,
blackly they screamed, the bats
bending his hat back on him

a baseball glove rose, *his* glove,
a hand flying out of his hand

the firefly eyes of the vacant lot
seeing his hand rise,
the bats falling up

the bats remember:
a hand went from him,

falling



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# FATHERS AND CHILDREN

Stories by John Jurkowski,
John Hermann, Gerald Schoenewolf,
Alyce Ingram, and Steve Garmisa

Poems by Besmilr Brigham,
Albert Goldbarth, and Paul Petrie



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A STORY BY JOHN JURKOWSKI

# Conjurings, Conversations, Reality, etc.

The first vision conjured up is that of her, alone, on the Monday before Thanksgiving. She is sitting on the left side of the sofa, warmed by the morning sun. It has been a delightful autumn, ending in a long, pleasant, Indian summer. The grass does not yet show that it is dying, and large sections are covered by fallen leaves that glisten with dew from the night before. She sits with all of this directly outside the picture window, knowing it is there, capable of describing what she sees; yet she is truly unmoved by it.

She is wearing a loose fitting blouse draped over a pair of slacks that are coming apart at the seam. She will, during the next few minutes, run her fingers along the loose threads hanging from the seam, for she knows the rent is there, and connect them to what she believes are her husbands' inadequacies as a lover, friend, and male.

She has a cloth wrapped around her head for a dusting cap. It is one of the significant things she does every morning, whether she plans to dust or not. It is not worn for practical purposes, that is, to keep dust out of her hair; rather, it serves as a mood setter. It is her acknowledgement of work to be done; by the time she removes the cloth and eats lunch, she will have a feeling of accomplishment.

Now for the essential aspects of the conjuring. She is making lists. List upon list upon list. Her face shows only the concentration on the list making; perhaps that is why she is unmoved by the loveliness outside.

On Thanksgiving morning, she and her husband and their daughter will drive to the city to spend the holiday with the parents of the husband. They have not seen her family in almost twelve years. Her father has been married three times: divorced from her mother, then widowed, now separated from his third wife when she produced an eighteen year old daughter a week after the marriage. Her mother has also been married three times: divorced from her first two husbands, and preparing to leave the third, an alcoholic, as soon as she can get the key to the safe deposit box away from him and remove the valuables she considers hers.

The principal of this conjuring has been looking forward to the trip to the city, and making the trip means making lists: lists of what must be done around the house before they leave, what must be gotten ready and taken with them, and most important, lists of the clothes which will be purchased during the shopping jaunt into Manhattan from his parents' apartment in the Bronx, the day after Thanksgiving.

Shopping is a wonderful catharsis for her. Plunging through stores, eyes moving back and forth as she works between the counters and racks of clothes. She is pleased by this image: the unselfish love of a mother shopping for her child and herself.

Whose money is spent?

His money.

How does she acquire it?

This is one of the unpleasant things she believes detracts from her completeness as a female. *She has no money of her own.*

Therefore she must obtain it.

Worse thoughts than that in moments of depression.

She must come to *him* for it: I have to come to you and beg for everything we get.

The last sentence of many non-conversations, followed by one person leaving the room without a word. The unspoken accusation: *your absence in no way diminishes me.*

A conjured-up conversation, based on certain facts of reality:

There is something basically wrong with a man who doesn't fight back.

I have let you know I am aware of what it is I am not fighting back about. Because I am not being fooled, there is no need for fighting back.

If you don't fight for what you want people will walk all over you, and you won't get anything.

I shouldn't have to fight you.

It's the battle of the sexes. You weren't a coward when I married you. You were masculine.

I didn't realize I had become a coward.

You have a basic flaw. Inside you, you're a very weak man. You won't fight back. You turn around and walk away.

Why argue about things that neither of us seem capable of changing?

You ought to at least want your own way. There are some rights that a *man* . . . . should demand . . . . from his wife.

I get the things that matter to me. There are some that you lose by demanding.

Frankly, if I were you, I would have slapped my face a few times, if my virility had been challenged and criticized, the way I've challenged yours.

Do you *want* to get slapped around?

I could never respect a man who hit women.

Then what do you want?

What would you do if somebody tried to take me away from you?

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*JOHN JURKOWSKI lives and writes on Maiden Lane—a street name possible only in the state of Connecticut. This is his first* NAR *appearance, but he is much-published elsewhere.*



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I'd wish you good luck if you wanted to go.

Be serious. Would you fight him?

Why should I fight him? To prove my masculinity?

Would you fight him?

What do I use to fight with?

What would you do if you came home and found I was gone? If I leave you, other men will think you aren't virile.

I'd look for you. In all the closets, and under all the beds.

I want you to know you have a basic flaw: you're a very weak man.

Thanksgiving Day; they are on the road to the Bronx. She is asleep while he drives. Her eyelids are partially open, the pupils rolled back into her head, and only the whites of her eyes show. Nancy is in the back seat, scribbling with crayons in a coloring book. From time to time he reaches back with one arm, rubs her cheek and head, then squeezes her hand; she squeezes it in return, and goes back to coloring.

His wife awakens in the middle of a thought:

—I'm sure she'll poison us all again, the way she does every Thanksgiving.

Are you awake, or are you talking in your sleep?

Your mother will poison us again. She'll leave the turkey out on the table overnight, in that warm apartment, and the stuffing will turn. I'll have to make sure Nancy doesn't eat any, even though she loves it the next day with gravy.

Talk to my mother about it.

She's not my mother. And besides, she'd just tell me what she always does, that she's been doing things like this for thirty or forty or fifty years.

Is that why I'm sick every year when we drive back?

Probably.

Why didn't you tell me?

I thought your stomach was strong enough to take it.

I don't know why you don't tell her. Are you afraid she'll be angry with you?

What are you going to do when your father calls this afternoon? Are you going to tell him what to do?

What makes you ask that?

He does the same thing every year, and you don't like it, but you put up with it. 'Son, will you drive down and get me? I hate to make you give up your parking spot and drive into Manhattan in the holiday traffic, but it's just this once a year. You can save me the subway ride home from work.' You won't even drive me into Manhattan on Friday when I go shopping.

It lets him see Nancy sooner.

But you complain about it every year. You end up driving around and around the block looking for a parking space after you bring him home, and tomorrow morning when you have to get up early and move the car because of the alternate side of the street parking, you'll say you'll never do it again. So don't tell me *I've* got to change things by talking to your mother.

Looking for a parking space isn't the same as being poisoned.

Answer the question: what are you going to do when your father calls this afternoon?

I find the correct answer to too many questions is: *I don't know.*

A telephone call made from the ornately decorated lobby of an apartment house on Park Avenue, to a small, third floor apartment in the Bronx. In order of appearance at the telephone, the people of this conjuring are:

Momma, a white haired woman in a house dress:

What time will you be home?

The regular time. No, no, wait a minute. Just a little later than the regular time, but don't tell my darling granddaughter that, or she'll be upset.

Self praise stinks. She hasn't even asked for you.

The superintendent has invited Billy and the day maintenance man and me up to his apartment for a Thanksgiving drink when we get finished, and I don't want to turn him down.

Just one now, you Polack. You aren't twenty-five anymore. I've been working all day on dinner, and I want you to be able to enjoy it. And Nancy wants to see you.

I thought you just said she didn't ask for me.

Here's Nancy.

Nancy, four years old:

Grandpa, when are you coming home?

Soon, honey. Grandpa loves you. He's coming home as soon as he can.

Why do you have to work today? Daddy doesn't.

Because your Grandpa is a very important man, and people need him to open doors for them. You ought to see your Grandpa in his uniform, with all the gold braid. Do you know that two generals and an admiral walked past the building today and saluted your Grandpa?

Really?

Of course. They addressed me by my correct title: Field Marshall. They wanted to discuss military strategy, but I had to call a cab for a heavy tipper.

Oh, Grandpa. Her eyes are shining with excitement.

I'd tell you more about it, but your Grandpa is a modest man. He starts to laugh, as he imagines her, so intent, at the other end of the connection. Sweetheart, let me talk to your Daddy, but don't go away. I want to talk to you some more.

The husband, Daddy, son:

Look son, don't bother to come down for me today. I know you will if I ask you to, because you love me, and I love you for it, but I'm going to have a drink with the boys, and then I'll just hop in the subway. I hate to see you lose your parking space. That's all I have to say. Put Nancy on again. You know I love you, but it's my granddaughter I miss.

I'm going in and lie down on Pop's bed.

Should I call you in time to pick him up?

No. He said he would come home by subway.

The parents' bedroom is in the front of the apartment, and he closes the door behind him to shut out the noise.



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The heat has been turned down in the room, and the sheets are cool. The bedding has his father's odor. He is completely relaxed and happy, lying in a strange, yet comfortable bed, in a place he knows, the memory of it contained in a secret place in his mind, that he loves to discover over and over again. He is overcome with a feeling of safety and belonging as he falls asleep.

The vision conjured continues to be that of the apartment in the Bronx, later in the afternoon. The bedroom is dark and silent, as the husband sleeps. Momma walks from the back room, where she has been talking on the telephone, through the kitchen and living room, down the hall. She shakes her son gently.

Is it time for dinner already?

It isn't but it could have been. Look, will you do me a favor? Your father's been in the superintendent's apartment for almost an hour. Every time I call he promises to leave, but if you don't go down and get him, I don't know when he'll get home.

I don't remember him ever doing this before. He's always been in such a hurry to get up here and see Nancy that wild horses won't hold him back.

I'm worried about the lunkhead. We can eat as soon as you get home.

Here he is, my Number One son. Engineering degree, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. MIT. Pronounced and enunciated carefully and precisely.

There had to be some brains in the family somewhere, but I don't know where he got them from. Not my side of the family. Strong back, weak mind, that's me.

Sit down, my Number One son, I'll be ready to go in just a minute. Have a drink with us while I finish up. Is Momma mad? I'll bet the old battle-axe is furious. You didn't mind coming down for me? How mad do you think Momma is? I'd better call her and tell her we're on our way home. Mr. O'Brien, do you mind if I use the phone a minute?

A wave of the superintendent's hand, don't even bother to ask, and his father leaves the room.

The men are sitting at the table in the dining alcove; there are several bottles of whiskey on the table, and a few six-packs of beer. Each man has a glass of whiskey in front of him, and a can of beer.

The last thing the son wants, on an empty stomach, with the holiday traffic on the way back to the Bronx, is a boilermaker. But after the introduction his father gave him, he must sit down and drink, acting as though he wanted to. Otherwise they will believe all the stereotyped plots about people like him, and his father will have to live with them:

What a shame. His father was an immigrant, a workingman all his life, until he hurt his back and was laid off and went to work here as a doorman. Hell, we liked him so much we elected him shop steward.

Do you think the kid would sit down and have a drink with us? On Thanksgiving? Hell no. He doesn't know what it's like to sweat for a buck, and need to relax.

So he takes the chair that is offered, and sits, besieged with help.

What do you drink?

Rye.

Fine. A water glass is filled half way; a can of beer is popped open on the other side of the table and handed across.

Hell of a nice kid. Sat right down with us, a bunch of ignorant workingmen. He's his father's son all right. He's not just book smart.

The whiskey tastes smooth and warm, and he enjoys sipping it. The beer tops it off perfectly.

The father returns. My darling wife; aside: the old battle-axe—laughter from the crowd—your loving mother, says you are to bring me home, pause, immediately.

I'll call and tell her we've already left. Laughter again, but he regrets the joke he has made at the expense of his absent mother. He loses himself for an instant in a long sip of whiskey, and several swallows of beer.

They continue, until the son has been there for more than one drink to be sociable, and a second to indicate enjoyment. He realizes he is drunk, and no longer feels in direct contact with what is going on around him.

The superintendent leaves the room, and comes back motioning to the son.

I thought you and your father would be home by now.

In just a minute, he says. The words are slurred, and run together.

Oh my God. I thought you had more sense.

Momma, you shouldn't have expected me to come down here and yank him out like he was a child. He has to work with these people.

I don't give a damn right now.

We'll be home in a few minutes. We'll leave right now.

He hears the telephone slam down in answer.

The Momma is pretty mad, huh son?

She's irate as hell. We'd better get going.

I hope she doesn't meet us at the door with a baseball bat. I've got enough lumps on my head already.

As they start for the door, the telephone rings in the other room; his father motions to the superintendent, and speaks softly, in fear that the caller will hear him, even though the phone has not been answered.

Tell her we just left. The men wave goodbye, acting as though silence were important.

The cold air shocks them slightly more alert, but they are both quite drunk. The son knows it has taken him a lot less drinking to get where his father is after an afternoon at it. His father gets in the front seat, and falls asleep almost immediately, with his fedora down over his forehead.

The son drives slowly for several blocks, until he barely gets past a changing traffic light, and is out of synchronization with the staggered timing system. He sees the lights for blocks ahead turning red, but he is too drunk to brake evenly and gently. At the last instant before they stop, the car lurches.

His fathers' eyes open. Do you know where you are?

The son leans forward and bends himself around the steering wheel to look up at the sign.

We're at Madison and 98th Street.



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You don't know where you are, spoken as a pronouncement. Admit it. You're lost. His chin drops slowly to his chest, and he is asleep again.

They stop at 125th Street with more control, but it awakens his father.

Do you know where you are this time?

At 125th Street.

Shorty, do you have any idea how you're going to get across into the Bronx?

I'm going to take the bridge at 138th Street, and then go up the Concourse.

Are you sure the bridge is open?

It was when I came down.

Off to sleep again.

Open up, he yells in mock anger, knocking on the door. He means to overdo it slightly so Nancy will hear him, but he is louder than he intended.

Here you are, you old souse, Momma says, looking at his face intently. You smell like a brewery.

I resent the implications of that. Where is my darling granddaughter?

She runs down the hallway, and seems to flow out from behind her Grandmother's hips, grabbing him around the neck and pulling him down.

Ugh, Momma says, do you want your daughter kissing that rumpot?

The daughter-in-law wants to appear stern, but doesn't want to offend her father-in-law. She stands back neutrally as he brushes past on the way to the living room, where he plops down on the sofa.

It's nice of you to finally get home to your family for Thanksgiving dinner.

Is that any way to talk to your beloved husband?

The least you could have done was get home for your Granddaughter.

Yes, my love. Of course, my sweet. You're so right, my dearest, he says, winking at Nancy.

A few minutes later the door opens.

Where did you park?

Around the corner. I caught somebody as they were pulling out.

Which way are you facing?

Uptown.

The sign should read: No parking this side of street, Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday—8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

That's exactly what it said.

You two have a half an hour to sober up. Get in there and take a nap so you can enjoy my dinner.

Momma, we're fine.

I want your father to go in and lie down.

His father and mother leave for the bedroom, and he sits down on the sofa. He can hear his mother badgering his father.

Am I really that bad?

Your face is bright red. You should be smart enough by now. And Nancy is looking at you like you're crazy.

I can't get the shirt over my head, spoken in muffled tones. Help me with the shirt. You really think I'm that bad? His voice sounds heavy with depression. Can Nancy hear me now?

The son gets up and walks slowly into the bedroom.

Pop, Nancy doesn't know. He is surprised to see the warmth in his mother's face. His father is sitting on the edge of the bed, and moves his round, bald head to look up at his son.

You don't think she knows?

All she knows is you act happy, and she likes you that way. She doesn't know what the word drunk means.

His father's face seems to light up in a smile, and the son is pleased that his opinion has counterbalanced his mother's criticism.

She loves you.

His father looks up at his wife, continuing to smile broadly. He does not realize she is on the verge of laughing.

The last vision conjured up is that of the leave-taking. The wife and daughter are in the car; he and his father stand in the street behind the open trunk; Momma is leaning out the window of the apartment. The son has felt pains in his stomach since the middle of the night.

Are you glad you came down for the holiday?

Sure. It's hard for me, though, when you and Momma argue, like you did Thanksgiving night.

We carry on like that all the time. She was worried about me because I'm not supposed to drink since I had my stroke. But the old battle-axe loves me. We probably couldn't live without arguing.

Then it really doesn't matter?

Underneath it I know we need each other.

And if you don't argue, but you know that underneath it you have nothing—no affection, no respect, just nothing?

The question goes unanswered; the father seems to be absorbed in his previous answer.

The doctor said the stroke nearly killed me. I'm living on time I almost didn't get. Your mother and I have had a good life together. Before the stroke we had you, and then your brother; and now we have Nancy. What more could we ask for?

Nothing. Nothing at all. As long as you know what you need. □



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*JOHN HERMANN is widely published, has for the past fifteen-odd years been teaching "some kind of classes" at California State University, Long Beach.*

# MACULA

## A Story by John Hermann

I don't want a dog," she told him. She was an only child, and her father was trying to be helpful, she knew. She lay on her stomach on the couch in his study, reading. He had finished his typing and had turned the chair around at the desk to talk with her. She heard the scrape of the chair legs across the rug.

"Why not?" he said. "I've already talked with your mother about it." He was forty-one and three months, his driver's license said so, and his hair in a crew cut had just started to show straws of grey at the back of his head and along his temples. She pointed out the new ones to him whenever she discovered them. She was waiting for him to get old—she admitted it. Only he seemed not to: playing tennis every week, swimming, using her surf mat at the beach to bounce like a youngster along the crests of the waves toward shore. She turned over to face him. Outside, beyond the wall of windows at his back, summer was trickling away through the last weeks of August, the California sun filling up the fenced yard with yellow light as if the yard were a swimming pool.

"I don't *like* dogs," she said. "They lick hands. They whimper." She drew up her knees, slightly dirty she noticed below her plaid shorts from horseback riding that morning, and propped the book on them. "If you want to get me a pet, get me a kitten." She went back to her reading while the figure of her father, beyond the edge of the book, remained silent, searching for something to say. It was he who wanted the dog. It wasn't for her. A dog to replace that Fido of his he had had as a child. She had so little trouble seeing through him that sometimes she pretended not to just to see how far he would go. If he would only admit, just once, that he might be wrong about something, about anything—that she might know perhaps the color of socks she should wear with her jumper better than he did. If just once. He pyramided his hands in front of him like a tepee, contemplative, serious. "You wouldn't want a cat," he said as if cats were like warts. "They're highly egocentric." He spoke as if he were quoting an epigram from one of the books that lined the wall beside her and covered the shelves above his desk.

"And graceful and independent and smart," she reminded him, so that without looking up from the page, she saw the quick motion of his head as he turned to look at her. But he said nothing. Instead, reaching forward, he took a card from the side of his desk and then sat back in his chair. "I found this on the bulletin board at the grocery store." He raised the card briefly before him like her sixth-grade teacher Mr. Baine holding up a piece of equipment in his science demonstrations for everyone to see. He read: "Beautiful year-old collie. Good with children. Affectionate. Must sell immediately." He let the card rest in his lap. "Well, what do you think?" He was being a companion, letting her agree with him.

She pretended to read—about a wild horse who was



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going to have to choose between betraying his herd and endangering a boy who had befriended him, and she had grown so tired of horses already that morning from whacking her heels into the fat sides of Ben and Ernie and Hi at the academy, learning to ride with the other girls of her scout troop, that she closed her book without much regret. "All right," she said, "let's go see this collie that's good with fathers."

The address was 2254 Euclid, and holding the card, she sat in the front seat, like her mother with the maps on their camping trips, directing him where to go. "Left, here," she said as they came to Stearnes. "It's past Bellflower."

"You'll see," he told her as they drove past the roofs climbing with bougainvillea, past the housewives in their swimming suits watering the front lawns, who up and down the block on each side were as uniform and as predictable as mailboxes. Out of the magenta of the bougainvillea, over the arching spray of the hoses came his voice beside her: ". . . and when I used to come home from school, Fido, his big ears flapping around his head, would come dashing off the back porch to meet me." His voice faded backward like a string-severed kite to that boyhood of his in northern Wisconsin where her grandmother still lived, alone now in a clapboard house with a porch and geraniums in flower boxes all along the railing. ". . . Wouldn't you like a dog like that?"

"Euclid is the next street," she said. The dog, she could tell, was to teach her all those sentimental values of grandmother's cooking, of his own sturdy-legged childhood, of loyalty repaying kindness. What a father.

The house they wanted looked like any other of the houses to its right or left. The 2254 in scrawling Gothic was on a porch post, and the stucco above the border of acanthuses was peeling away from the outside walls in discolored blotches like scabs. The door stoop was a raised slab of concrete, and the screen door before which they stood waiting for an answer to their knock bowed in at the bottom like a fish net.

A middle-aged woman in her thirties opened the door, a flowered apron with roses as large as cabbages covering her pregnancy. Behind her in the room a child just beginning to walk plopped on the floor backward on the parachute pad of diapers pinned to her. She fell beside a collie, its nose between its paws, its eyelids flickering as the misdirected pat from the child's hand descended toward its head. Her father was very polite, as he always was with poor people. "We saw your notice at the store. . . My daughter. . . A long time. . ." They were invited in. The dog got up and came over to her father seated on the edge of the piano bench. It put its chin on his knee and wagged its tail in a slow metronome of affection.

"She's very friendly," the woman was saying, "and Doodie here just loves her." Doodie in response got up and came over to the dog, putting her hands on its back and then thumping the dog's sides like a drum. The dog paid no attention and kept its head on her father's lap. The house was strewn with toys, cast out like satellites from a playpen pushed into one corner of the room—a top flung here on the floor, a turned-over dump truck there, some children's blocks near the door to the kitchen, a panda doubled up like a hairpin at her feet, its nose ploughing into the rug.

"We call her Honey," the woman said. Her father was scratching behind the dog's ears. It sat at his feet, its head held up toward his face, its eyes watching him. He was very pleased, looking at the dog as he talked as if speaking to it. "Of course we'll take it. He's just what we've wanted, isn't he, Mary?" He had swept her into the decision without hesitation.

"She," the woman corrected him, smiling. "It's a girl."

"All the better; all the better." It was as if by his astuteness he had just won another tennis match, love sets. He took out his checkbook and, standing, wrote the check on top of the upright piano. The dog, left by her father, came over and sat at her feet, the end of its tail on the floor making tiny overtures of greeting. The eyes were brown and confiding; the back a beginning ski-slide of white at the ruff and then a path of cascading smooth, honey-colored fur down toward the waving tail tip.

She leaned down and whispered in its ear: "Do you bite fathers?" And the dog thumped its tail on the floor, just missing the doubled-up panda behind it.

The dog came with them without hesitation, and there was only the one wail of the little girl from within the house that followed them down the sidewalk toward the car before the door closed on the flowered apron behind the screen.

When they came into their yard, her mother, expectant, came out the door onto the patio. The dog ran up, her haunches lowered, wagging, to sit before the red loafers. Her mother patted the upraised head gingerly, smiling.

"It's a her," she told her mother. "Honey."

"Perhaps we'll change that," her father said. He was talking to her mother. "I'd look kind of silly standing in the front yard calling 'here, Honey; here, Honey, Honey. Come here, girl,' for all the neighbors to come to their windows about." He had made his voice falsetto for effect.

Her mother smiled. She still thought after twenty years that his jokes were funny, and liked him even when he stormed around the house like a broken windmill tossing shirts, pants, handkerchiefs around looking for his sweat socks for tennis. She supposed that somewhere back before she was born there was picture after picture of him in the album of her mother's memory with captions written under the pictures in white ink: David at Pickerel Lake, 1932. Or, David and I before the apartment in Durham, 1943. Or, David with canoe, *that week*, 1942. Somewhere beneath the father-face that was now bending over beside the collie, back of those glasses, submerged within the slightly paunched silhouette, had been a slimmer, more boyish bravado, she supposed, than she had ever known. For a moment, seeing him scratch behind the collie's ears and along the muzzle upraised toward him, she herself reconstructed him as he knelt in the snow before his Fido on the corner by Barney Jewel's music store, crying, as a boy, for the black and white mongrel stiffening from poison that it had eaten at Krom's Grocery Store, the tears dropping off his cheeks into the snow as, taking off his mittens, he bent over and picked up the dog in his arms and put it in his mother's wicker washbasket on his sled and pulled it



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home, snuffling, gulping, wiping his nose on the sleeve of his corduroy mackinaw past the neighbors' houses. Or so he had said, had told, had reminisced. And she hardly doubted him.

"What'll we call her?" he said, turning to her. "And for heaven's sake, not Lassie."

It was his decisions already made which she was expected to agree to, it was his encroachments on her world, like someone sticking his head, unwanted, into her home-cave, that called forth in response the image of a rifle held steadily in her hands. So that once he had spoken the name, she clung to it like a limpet to a rock. "Why not Lassie?" She came up and put her arm around the scruff of the dog's neck. "Wouldn't you like to be called Lassie?" The dog turned its face to her, wagged its tail, lifted its paw in response to a trick someone had taught it before. "See," she said to her father. She sat down on the low block wall along the patio outside her father's study, and called the dog. "Come here, Lassie. Come here, girl." And the dog came, to lay its face in her lap while she scratched the top of its nose, the white patch on the forehead.

Her father looked to her mother still standing before the door. "It's her dog," her mother reminded him. "That's what you were getting it for, you said."

Her father came over to sit beside her on the wall. His hands were brown and meticulous, resting on the knees of his slacks. "You don't want to call her Lassie." His voice was reasonable, quiet, as he tried to lead her toward the wisdom garnered for a long time now from the books along his wall, toward the mystical knowledge of how intelligent, sensible people acted. It was the first stage of all their disagreements. It was his adult gambit trapping her uncertainty of what their friends the Mooreheads, the Lees, the Martins might think if, like a five-year old, she called her dog Lassie.

"Lassie," she told him firmly, and the dog unexpectedly in response put its nose closer into her lap. The leaves of the olive tree stopped turning from grey to green in the wind; the plumes of the pampas grass above the fence held still and waited.

"After all, what's wrong with Lassie?" her mother said, trying, as she always did, to be the mediator, and for a moment the three of them—she, the dog, her mother—had outnumbered him. He looked from one of them to the other.

"All right," he said as if he were warning both of them of a drop-off just beyond the pier that neither of them saw but from which he would eventually have to rescue them. "Call her Lassie." He got up from the wall and hitched at his trousers like a halfback getting set in the backfield. He had gestures like that which made people who didn't know him think he had been an athlete—flexing his fingers at odd moments, like a pitcher, to strengthen them; running his hand through his short-cropped hair in imitation of a tennis player he had seen on TV wiping away perspiration before taking a serve; sitting in a chair with his hands resting between his thighs like a boxer in the corner between rounds. "It's her dog," he conceded, shrugging, "but if you name her that, somebody'll have to teach her how to vault over a rail-fence every time a kid's voice calls, "Lath--ee--ee, Lath--ee--ee,' from a farmyard." He saccharined the call, lisping it, as he went toward the door of his study. "But not me," he warned. So that the name, at least, was hers.

In the next two months, when, according to his plan, she was supposed to be learning how kindness begets affection, they both discovered that the dog liked everyone indiscriminately. The meter man from the gas company easing through the gate was greeted with a bounding rush of welcome and hand-licking as if he had just brought her a pound of horse meat. Solicitors, frolicked with, were found when her mother opened the door, bending down to pat the honey-colored head. Neighbors' children, two- and three-year olds, poked fingers into her mouth to see her teeth, blew into her ears, tried to hold down her tail from wagging, and in their petting, tottering teetering finally fell on top of her while she sat docilely before them. She loved them all—strangers, mailmen, friends, garbage collectors, deliverers, those who fed her and those who did not, those who petted her and those who ignored her.

"Well?" she asked her father at lunch one day. "What now?" It had been she, following his suggestions, who had fed Lassie, brushed her, laid out her rug on the patio. It had made no difference.

"It takes time," he said. "She'll learn."

So that Lassie became for the two of them a compass needle that swung NNE, and swerved SSW. Sometimes the dog romped with her, leaping for the old tennis ball caromed against the garage, catching it, bringing it back, pretending to fight for it while she tugged to get it from between the gleaming teeth. At other times, getting up from the rug at the foot of her bed, it deliberately left her, padding out of the room to go lie at her father's feet where he sat in the livingroom smoking his pipe in the squeaking, ornate platform rocker his mother had given them and cherished by him like the memory of the kolaches she used to bake for him.

She wanted to ask him what secret buried in his books—his Dylan Thomases, his Thomas Manns, his Feodor Dostoevskis, those slightly ridiculous names she heard mentioned now and then—was emerging from around a dog who indefatigably chased hummingbirds from one end of the lawn to the other, who snapped off the begonias her mother had potted near the gate, crashing on top of them in a foolish, whirling lunge at a bee. Learned? A few things, she admitted, but none that he had counted on: urine will leave a brown spot in the dichondera as large as a dinner plate where nothing will grow afterward; kennels are run by men who look like butchers in their aprons and who smell like Lysol; horse meat looks like frozen blood ground up; collies shed enough fur twice a year to stuff a pillow (her mother shouting it over the noise of the vacuum cleaner pushed across the rug); bred collies have ears whose tips tilt over like the petals of an amaryllis. Merit badge No. 367: Dog and Father Care. She could sew it on her sash next month.

She kept up her chores even more conscientiously, not so much to win the dog over but to make sure her father would have no claim against her. But the dog gradually



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gravitated toward her father, looking at him for permission before coming to her in the yard, and returning to him once she had finished scratching the ears, smoothing down the fur along the back. It was nothing decisive, but he was getting his Fido back once more. Now if he would just admit. . .

After what she thought was a decent interval, just before school was out for Christmas, she got a kitten from Mrs. Basel across the street who one morning had found six of them in a box in her garage along with a stray mother. She named him Morrie. Her mother said her having one was all right, and her father, when he was told, only grunted. "It'd better be house-broken," he warned as if he were labeling a carton, High-Explosive.

During the next month as if in reprisal for the doll bed cushioned with an old wool sweater for Morrie to sleep in, for the bowl of cat food next to Lassie's now, for the whiskered face crouching over the shared basin of water, Lassie dug up the camellias, undermined the Indian laurel tree, and finally got collie-nose. She couldn't be sure just when it happened.

"Now what?" her father said when she had first noticed it. He had just come back from playing tennis, a towel wrapped around his neck inside his gabardine windbreaker, his face purple-red, his horn-rimmed glasses bespecked with dried perspiration.

"Wait," she said. She called Lassie, while her father sat down on the patio wall outside his study, his racket beside him, the yellow and red can of balls on top of it.

While they waited, she asked out of some hope that buried like a seed many seasons before might sprout one day: "You win again?"

He looked at her smiling. "Of course," he said. He boasted about his tennis to annoy her, she knew, but also to reinforce the impression of his books—that somehow he had access to secrets of success that she did not have. He won, even as he said, didn't he?

"He plays only with people he can beat," she told her mother.

"That's not so. He plays with his friends."

"I wish someone would beat him once," she said. "Twice or three times maybe."

"Don't talk like that. He's your father, you know." As if she owed him a debt.

He sat patiently in his white shorts for Lassie to appear from behind the house, his shoes tied in a double knot, his sweat socks banded around his ankles. He should be getting older to go with his greying hair, but he wasn't. Only the slight bulge where his waist should have been gave him away.

Lassie came up apologetically as if she knew already she was disgraced. The dog came over to her father. "Look." She held the dog's nose upward, under the chin, for him to look at, and Lassie curled her lips back from her teeth, afraid of someone touching her nose.

Her father took the face between his hands firmly, as if he had seen a veterinarian do it and knew exactly how. While he looked, while he gingerly touched the fur already thinning above the nose and alongside the mouth, Lassie remained like a child in a dentist chair—quiet and fearful.

"It looks like mange," he said.

"Mrs. Poole across the street says it's collie-nose." Her father said nothing. "It's a disease," she told him, "a skin condition," her words marching toward his gabardine jacket as authoritatively as the row of titles on a shelf of his books. "It could cover her whole face."

He looked at the nose again and then releasing the dog's head, got up. "I'll shower, and we'll take her to a vet to see what he can do."

It was collie-nose. The vet said so. Nor did the medicine he gave them help. The nose lost all of its pigmentation, became red, raw. The romps at the beach that spring, where before she had chased the curling line of foam, barking and frightening it into no more than a flattened, rippling hush on the porous sand, had to be stopped. She tried it once and returned to their blanket, lying beside them, rubbing with a paw the skin inflamed by the salt water. And Morrie, a tiger cat with eyes as hard as electric light bulbs and an indifference he wore like a halo, learned in three weeks to push the screen door open with his blunt face to get outside while Lassie, raw nosed, whimpering stood behind entrapped.

Before the end of summer Morrie had burrowed himself beneath the blankets with her at night, raising his chin to be scratched without opening his eyes, purring but seldom, as if even that gesture of appreciation were too much trouble. While outside on the patio beside her father smoking his pipe in the darkness, Lassie lay, the red nose resting between her paws—watching the olive tree grow, the stars turn beyond the pampas grass spraying like a black-green fountain over the silhouetted palings of the grape-stake fence. Joy not the keynote for herself either, but satisfaction in a measure that once perhaps her father had failed. Not failed so much as not accomplished, while he puffed his pipe outside and, she imagined, thought about kind hearts and coronets and gentle people.

She didn't realize how much the fact that loyal dogs get collie-nose meant to him until a day in August when they had stopped at a filling station and Lassie hung her head out the rear window, thumping her tail on the back seat hoping someone would pat her. The service man as he came around to clean the windshield said: "My that's a pretty dog. What's the matter with her nose?"

Her father said curtly, "She's lost the pigmentation," as if the man had criticized his car.

"Too bad," the attendant said as he squirted the cleaner on the windshield and then vigorously wiped it off.

"She'll never get it back either," she said to him from her side of the car, in front of the profile of her father's face. He came around to her side of the car to do the other windshield.

"That's too bad."

"It's very sore. She won't let anybody touch it. Not even my father."

"Sure looks sore."

She leaned out the window and was talking to the side of his face, to his white shirt and his blue bow-tie and his natty blue slacks. Minute men. Like those farmers at Concord or wherever it was. Only different. "She can't even play ball anymore against the garage, or chase the waves at the beach because she bumps it and it bleeds and gets a scab



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on and then the scab gets knocked off." Her voice was very solemn.

He lifted the windshield wiper and made a few swipes at the lower chrome of the windshield. "Perhaps a vet . . ."

"We've had her there," she told him. "Nothing will help. He said so. Isn't that right?" She turned to her father.

"That's enough," he told her, and the attendant went to the back window where she saw the plastic bottle held against the window, saw the spray spit out in a cloud and the arm wiping the window clean. She sat back in her seat. "I was only. . ."

"That's enough," he warned, while Lassie's tail, when the attendant came around the car toward her back window, thumped regularly like a rug beater against the cushion. Her father signed the credit card. They left. Down Palo Verde. His hands were in the ten-two position on the wheel as if showing her how sensible he was, how controlled he could be. "If she's too much bother, I'll take care of her from now on," he said.

She hadn't meant that at all, but he wanted to think she had, and what had started out as a straw tossed into the conversation between them had now become a rock. "All right," she said, angry, the tears in her eyes. "She's always been your dog anyway. You didn't get her for me. You got her for yourself."

All during the following week he treated Lassie as if she were another child in the family, brushing her coat with an old hairbrush until it glistened in the sun. He cleaned out her food dish; he freshened the water in her basin; he bounced the ball gently against the garage so that she could catch it with no more than a sedate, twirling leap. Building up her ego. From her room, she could hear his busy work. She rubbed Morrie, on the counterpane beside her, under the chin. She turned another page of *The Old Man and the Sea*, of Santiago who liked good sharks and hated bad ones as if somehow he could tell the difference.

And then the Saturday just before school began she found out from her mother what had happened. It was the day of the week her father regularly played tennis at 9:30 with Eric Monley, an older friend of his whom he could beat without much trouble. It made Sundays serene. Carrying Morrie, she came into his study that morning at 9:00 still in her pink nightgown, her hair trailing on her shoulders, in the aimless, shuffling, early-morning laziness that affected him like a thumbnail drawn across a blackboard. He was carefully cutting a tiny piece from one of her mother's discarded sponges, his white shorts fresh, his sweat-socks snug around his ankles, his gabardine windbreaker zipped so that it looked like a sweat-jacket on a basketball player. The roll of adhesive tape beside his racket on the edge of the desk looked like a white doughnut. He taped the piece of sponge along the outside knuckle of his index finger, and then wound another strip of tape around the finger to protect it further. He picked up his racket and tested his grip, flexing his fingers around the handle. He swung the racket a few times in the room, shifted it, uncertain, in his hand.

"Blister?" she said from where she lay on the couch watching.

"No," he said without looking at her. He picked up the can of balls, his wallet, the car keys, the towel, tucking them all in the crook of his arm like a boy with an armful of apples, and went out the door, leaving her to what he supposed was her conscience, her cat.

"Lassie bit his finger," her mother said when she asked. She sat at the table pushing the cereal and cream around in the bowl in front of her while her mother did the other morning dishes.

"She what?"

"He was playing ball with her, trying to take it from her mouth, you know, as you have to do when she won't give it up, and she pinched a nerve in his finger, he thinks." Her mother at the sink slid the plates into the suds with a soft click, swished the silverware through the water before tossing it onto the drainboard.

"You mean Lassie bit him? His faithful Fido?" The chuckle, the joke arose around the words unconsciously.

"It isn't funny." Her mother's tone was admonishing. "He may not be able to play tennis at all unless it gets better." She finished the dishes, untied her black and white checked apron, and draped it across the towel rack. "And you know what that would mean." It was like the warning for a hurricane—one thought ahead to trees lashing in the wind.

She spent the morning in her room, thinking of the possibilities, what he could say now, while she re-strung the charms on a broken bracelet, arranged the top drawer for her jewelry and handkerchiefs, waited for him to come home. She didn't even know she was waiting until she found herself listening to each of the cars as it came around the corner and started up their street. And then it was theirs, and the car door slammed, and the bell attached to the gate tinkled once as he opened, once as he shut the gate, and she heard him go to his study. She waited, listening, and then picking up Morrie from where he lay yawning amidst the crumpled sheets on her bed and hoisting him onto her shoulder beside her cheek, went to her father's study. He was sitting on the couch, his racket between his knees, slowly unwinding the discolored adhesive tape from his finger. The perspiration had run down his face, beside his ears, the lines of it disappearing into the towel collared around his neck like a scarf and tucked within the gabardine jacket.

She sat on the edge of his desk, her feet on his chair, stroking the back of Morrie's head. "Good game?" She modulated her voice to the innocence of the amaryllis blossom her mother had arranged in the vase before the living-room window yesterday—pink, delicate, ordered.

"All right," he said. He wadded up the tape and the matted piece of sponge and tossed them into the waste-paper basket under the desk.

"Mother said you hurt your finger playing with Lassie." She motioned vaguely toward the finger which he was massaging slowly and carefully.

"Yes," he said. The word, his voice, had tightened like a late-afternoon morning glory. It was as if he had surmised already why she had come. He got up and put his racket and can of balls on top the cabinet in the service porch and went through the kitchen toward his bedroom. She



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followed. He was sitting on the edge of the bed taking off his shoes, and she was looking at the top of his head as she stood in the doorway talking.

"Play singles?"

He grunted without looking up, shoving one of his shoes under the bed and slipping off the two pairs of his socks he always wore. She wanted to know, and yet the hope was afraid to ask, was afraid not to, until she said, backing away from the door as if to leave: "How badly did you beat him today?" When he didn't answer, but went on untying the double, sweat-tightened knot of the other shoe, she stopped and came back to the door. "You *did* beat him, didn't you?"

He unlaced the shoe and shoved that too under the bed. "No," he said without looking up at her, "I didn't." He took off the other socks and getting up went past her to the bathroom. She stood in the hall before the half-open door while he undressed, Morrie uneasy on her shoulder and digging his claws through her nightgown as she shifted him in her arm. She heard the glass door slide back from the shower, the water turned on. Happy within her, the hope waited to unfold like an anemone after the surge of a wave.

"How badly did he beat you?" she said, her voice rising to a shout over the water beating against the walls of the shower. "How badly. . ." But his face, old now without his glasses, suddenly appeared around the edge of the door. "6-3, 6-2, 6-2," he said, and the head disappeared and the door clicked shut. She heard him step into the shower, heard the glass door pulled shut, and then only the drum of the water.

Going into her room, she sat down carefully, formally, like a priestess, amidst the rumpled bedspread, the blankets on her bed, leaning back against the headboard waiting for the smile to begin. It had happened. Someone had beaten him. She whispered it into Morrie's ear: "Eric beat my father playing tennis."

But she had not foreseen that more permanent than her pleasure something else might remain. She waited, hopeful yet, until the shower had been turned off and she heard him toweling himself in the bathroom. But she knew then that the smile would not come; she surmised that he might have known it all along. And Morrie, fighting to get out of her arms, fastened his teeth, white and sharp, into the knuckle of her hand as if he had discovered only then another enemy. □

## Albert Goldbarth

# DUTY

The automatic completion of role: as if
to say by perfectly filling this constriction,
your throat goes numb to the tie's tight grip.

Sometimes the knot in the gut is so great,
the man your size who lives in you
is kneeling in pain with his steel knees

focusing all his hurt weight on your belly.
And what keeps you standing at such a time
if not his position, and your straight windpipe

the only escape for his howling
prayer to heaven? Church
is defined by people bent in two

who are given two choices: death
or walking out. The church itself is busy
admitting sun at a proper slant

through the red-stained glass
and providing a functional space for emotion.
When your father dies there is nothing left

to do but walk in, and comfort your mother.



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## The Earth Take Care

my cruel old love
when you go down into her
her own hard seed

returned to waste
broken in tears her waters
wash through

how long will her cycle take
to make that change

as she lies down with
covering you
covering the dead

still plant
that closes
over your heart

## The Re-curring Terror of the Poet's Face

my old father
looking out of tired eyes, the pupils
closed
blue-green as the sea, an ocean
of sight lost in the receding eyes

wet
watery,
i look into them as one looks at damp
fungus, near to vegetable life
animal life
growing from
        indention of rock that has become
his face

tiny pools of rain, drops of melted
blue snow
        clouds of this earth
have settled in

the shutters will not open anymore
the reflex
he looks into my face, hears
a voice
'i am all right, now'
                the not-solid bone
closes between us

i absorb a strength from him
to (at last) let down the lids
my own eyes
open

and i think of the dead poet's eyes

Besmilr Brigham

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# THREE POEMS FOR MY FATHER



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when a man kneels
to pick up a hand full of dirt
to feel the ground
and what will grow there

when a panther screams
crying in the night woods
dogs
running through snow
running through the brush
for rabbits
when a hunter passes

when old men come to look at their old men's graves
and children bend for hickory nuts
when women stand under the wild crepe trees

and lovers lie

all—all will move over your face

and when Caribs sing in their boats on the river

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*GERALD SCHOENEWOLF writes from lower Manhattan. His work has appeared in* ESQUIRE *and* TRANSATLANTIC REVIEW, *and plays of his have been produced in New York and Copenhagen.*

## A Story by Gerald Schoenewolf

# WEDLOCK

They lived in a little apartment on a crowded block of the Lower East Side, and they had a baby. He could be happy some of the time and she could be happy some of the time and the baby could be happy some of the time, but they couldn't all be happy all of the time, especially with one another. His name was Mark. Her name was Linda. The baby's name was Marcy. Their address was 429 East 7th Street and the baby cried a lot.

"Then why don't you go screw a few girls and get it over with? Why don't you?" Linda said to him one day, smiling lovingly. He was lying in the bathtub and she was sitting on the toilet. "I really wish to God you would!" she added, smiling very, very brightly. "I don't give a damn what you do any more. Really, for all I care you can go out and screw every girl in New York City! That's what you want to do, isn't it?"

The reason she was saying this was because Mark had a habit of telling her every now and then that he had married her before he had experienced other girls. He sank down in the bathtub, gazing with not so quiet desperation out the window above her head.

"Why don't you go out and screw one of those long-haired blonds you're always looking at whenever we're on the street?" Linda continued. "You think they're so much better than me. I'm sorry you had to get stuck with such a clod." She was a girl of the sunshine state of California who was currently angry. She threw her cigarette into the toilet, ripped a wad of toilet tissue from the roll and wiped herself.

He sniffed.

"Oh, what's the matter, poor dear? Got a cold?" She jerked up her pants, zipped her fly, shook her hair. "Who knows, maybe I'll have an affair one of these days. I know you don't think that's possible, you don't think any other man can compare with you. Well, you may be in for a little surprise." She flushed the toilet with elan. "Why don't you say something? Is it that bad? Are you going to slash your wrists in a minute?"

He looked down into the water. The baby was crying.

"I can't talk to you any more. You're going crazy, you really are. Everybody says you need help." She was standing behind him, her hand on the doorknob. "I just hate to see you so depressed all the time. I mean, how do you think it makes me feel? I feel like it's all my fault."

He stolidly brought a hand out of the cold water to rub his eyes. The baby was crying.

"I mean, what do you want? Can you tell me that?" She was standing over him now, clutching her breasts. "What can I do to make you happy? Can you talk?"

"Play with me," he said suddenly in his little-boy manner, smiling apologetically.

"Play with you!"

"Play with me."

She laughed very loudly and exclaimed, "Sure!" Then she leaned over and grabbed him with both hands.

"Hey!" His head sank into the water and bobbed up again. "Take it easy." He struggled, his arms clinging to the sides of the tub, to keep himself afloat.

"I'm playing with you, dear," she smiled.

"Come on," he said, holding her arms. "Why don't you take off your clothes and get in?"

"I'm not going to play with you," she said, flinging him away and standing up. "Play with yourself! God, you make me sick!"

"Please."

"No."

"Come on."

"No!"



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The baby was crying.

"I'll do something for you," he said quickly. "I'll clean the apartment. I'll wash your hair."

"Sure you'll clean the apartment," she said, standing by the door. "You'll pick up a few magazines and hang your clothes in the closet instead of dropping them on the floor, and then you'll sit down and that'll be the end of it."

"No, I'll sweep and mop and everything. Come on."

"I can't do it now. The baby's crying."

"I'll wash the windows."

"You won't wash the windows, you know you won't."

"Yes, I will. I really will. Come on."

"What about the refrigerator? Will you clean the refrigerator? Will you defrost the freezer?"

"Yes, I will."

"I don't believe you."

"I promise you I'll do it. If I don't do it you don't ever have to make another deal with me."

"And the bathroom? Will you clean the toilet bowl?"

"All right."

"The baby's crying."

"Let her cry. I have my needs too, you know."

She shook her head, smacked her tongue and knelt down. "You'd just better fulfill your end of the bargain. I don't know why I'm doing this. Because I'm stupid, I guess." She began to play with him and he closed his eyes and leaned back against the edge of the tub, happy as a breast-fed baby. "You're really something," she said, eying him with detachment. She sighed. "I don't know...I was talking to Madeline last night, and she said, 'Is anybody happy?' and I laughed. We both laughed. It was very funny, we couldn't think of a single person we know who's happy."

He began to groan.

"Why don't you try out for one of those off-off-Broadway plays? I mean, maybe it would be fun. You don't know until you try it."

"I don't want to," he murmured.

"Why?"

"I just don't."

"Tell me why?"

"Not now."

"There must be some good plays."

"There aren't."

He rose suddenly to the surface of the water, his body stiffening, his feet pressed against the other end. She played with him a bit faster, studying the fingernails of her free hand to see if they were even. One of the nails was cracked, and she said, "Oh, damn." In the other room the baby had begun to scream. Then it was over; he sank back into the water, smiling at her with tenderness.

"Was it all right?" she asked.

"Great. Great."

He was twenty-five years old. He was five feet and nine inches tall. He weighed 132 pounds. He could sit in a yoga position, with his legs intertwined, and he could place both legs behind his head. He had brown eyes and long brown hair, down to his shoulders. Sometimes his eyes were sullen, sometimes they were sparkling, sometimes they were piercing, since he was very moody. His nose was round and medium-sized, but one of the nostrils was larger than the other because of his tendency to sleep with the right side of his nose buried into the pillow. His chin was small and sharp. His neck, arms, and legs were also small. His teeth were excellent. When he was six years old he had sculpted a naked woman in the sand in his backyard and his mother found it and trampled it. He had been married for three years. Once, a few years back, he had gotten a role in an off-Broadway play, and a reviewer hailed him as the most promising actor to appear on the New York stage that season, but since that time he had not appeared in any more plays. He had two older brothers, one of them married. His mother telephoned him often from Texas, asking him to write her a long letter. His father wrote him from the State Mental Institution, telling him things were fine there. One day he walked from 92nd Street to Battery Park, a distance of six miles through heavy pedestrian and automotive traffic. His favorite color was magenta.

"I hear the Norwegian Line takes on cabin boys," he said to Linda as they sat before the television set one evening. "I could work my way to Europe. They pay 50 dollars a week plus room and board...God, just think, I could be happy and free...Everybody knows London is the place for theater anyway..." His eyes had something of the old spark in them.

"And what am I supposed to do while you're galivanting around in London?" she asked.

"I don't know," he answered irritably. She was always poo-pooing his ideas. "Look, I'll send for you, okay? Just let me get out of this rut first. Just let me get out of this stinking city. I've constantly got a sore throat. The soot clogs up the windows. People bitching at one another all the time. Egotists everywhere, especially in the theater. This place is sick, you can't walk the street any more without being insulted or threatened or shot at."

"Yes, I know, but there's a little problem of money. How do you expect me to pay the rent and take care of the baby?"

"Oh, hell," he said, hanging his head. "That's all you think about is the baby, the baby, the baby!"

"Well," Linda yelled. "Somebody has to."

She was twenty-six years old. She was five feet seven inches tall. She weighed a hundred and twenty-two pounds. Her hair was brown, thick-bristled, and wavy. She had a way of making a clicking noise with her throat right before going to sleep at night and right after waking up, which she continued to practice despite Mark's protests, because she claimed her throat itched at these times. She was generally thin except at the hips, which had accumulated some poundage during the four years they had been married. Her eyes were brown and she wore fairly thick-lensed glasses. She tended to walk slightly stooped over, as though she had a constant pain in her side, or as though she had to be always ready to pick up the baby. When she was a teenager she used to giggle a lot and her father would say to her, "You know, Linda, life isn't a bowl of cherries." When she was a little girl she had more dolls than any other little girl in her neighborhood, and her mother never made



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her wash dishes. Her older sister, who lived in Marin County, California, was divorced. One thing she was very ashamed of was that she had hair on her chest. She fervently believed that someday Mark was going to be famous and she would be his wife and they would love each other. Once she went a whole month without taking a bath. Her favorite color was purple.

"Do you think you could clean up this place now and then?" he said to her one day when he came home from work. He was always complaining about the way she kept the apartment. He picked up the pacifier, the beach ball, the old copies of *Vogue*, the blouse, the metal coffee cup full of cigarette ashes and the ashtray full of orange peelings that were lying on the easychair. Then he sat down.

"You think taking care of a baby is so easy," she said in defense of herself.

"Okay, I'll tell you what," he said. "You go to work as a temporary typist and I'll stay home with the baby. I bet I'll have time to clean the house and then some. I could write a book in my spare time."

"Sure, sure. The first time Marcy poops all over you, you'll have a fit."

"I'm fed up with your excuses."

"All my friends have cleaning ladies."

"It's like living in a storage bin."

"If we could just have an air conditioner."

"God, what a slob."

"And you're a boob."

At that point the baby, Marcy, entered the room on hands and knees. She was crying. It was something she was getting good at. She had developed her crying routine for some time and it was broken down into several phases. At first she would whine, but that rarely got her parents' attention. Then she would begin to cry out short sequences of Ah's. "Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah!" she would cry. Then these Ah's would become longer and longer until they merged into one long Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! —which was the next phase. The one long Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaa-aaaaaaaaah! would usually be followed by a long pause, during which time Marcy was inhaling, and then another long Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaah! If this didn't work, she began to scream in a very shrill and searing way until she turned blue so that it might seem to a passerby that she was being tortured. The screaming usually got her parents to her side, since it was embarrassing to explain to neighbors. But it sometimes took the baby at least a half hour to work up to the screaming, and it was hard work and she resented it.

Marcy, by the way, was one-and-a-half years old. She weighed twenty-two pounds. She was twenty-two inches long. She could stand up but she couldn't yet walk, and she didn't have a favorite color, although she generally preferred bright things rather than dark ones.

"Here," Linda said, scooping Marcy from the floor and dropping her into Mark's lap. "You feed the baby and I'll start dusting the baseboards."

"To hell with the baseboards," Mark replied. "You've got all day to dust the baseboards." He tossed Marcy back into her arms.

"No," Linda said, pushing Marcy back into his lap. "She's your baby, too, my dear."

"You're the one who wanted a baby, my dear," he replied, throwing Marcy back.

"And you're the one who fathered it," Linda said, returning her.

"I'm trying to relax," he said, dropping Marcy on the floor.

Marcy went into phase three.

They thought about swapping partners. First Mark thought of it, then Linda thought of it. They didn't have many friends, not because they weren't able to acquire and sustain friendships, but rather because it was difficult to find couples who were open enough and mature enough and unperverted by middle class values. They finally met the Bastianos while spending the weekend at a nudist colony in Nutley, New Jersey. He was an engineer and wore his hair in a crew-cut; she was a secretary for an insurance agent and her hair was shorter than Mark's. On the second night of their stay at the colony the two couples rendezvoused in Mark-and-Linda's cabin, getting high on a bottle of Gallo sherry.

"Hey, why are we all dressed?" Mark said after a lapse in the conversation. "This is a nudist colony, isn't it?"

"Yeah, right!" Tony Bastiano, a muscular young blond, replied.

JoAnne, a dark-haired beauty with hair on her upper lip, looked down at the floor without any trace of emotion. Linda smirked.

Then they all took off their clothes.

"You know what I'm thinking?" Mark said in his little boy way.

"I know what you're thinking," Linda said.

"What's he thinking?" Tony asked, the muscles on his chest rippling as he moved his jaw to speak.

Mark smiled at JoAnne with his little boy smile. JoAnne looked down at the floor.

"I'm wondering," Mark continued. "I'm wondering if you two have ever swapped with anybody."

"Oh, god!" Linda said, looking down embarrassedly.

JoAnne and Tony gave each other a blank stare. Then Tony turned to Mark with manly seriousness. "As a matter of fact, we have. Why do you ask?"

"Well, I was just thinking—" Mark went on, having difficulty holding his smile.

"You mean us?" Tony said, gesturing manfully at the four of them.

"Well, yes."

Mark glanced at JoAnne, who yawned. He glanced at Linda, who winced. He glanced at Tony, who leaped to his feet and took charge.

"Great! I tell you what, you two take this room, and Linda and I'll go into the back. Linda?" He held out his tanned arm.

Linda looked up at him over the top of her glasses and said, "Oh, god." She looked at Mark. "I don't know. We've never done this before." Mark gave her a hard push with his eyes. She turned to Tony again, her eyes dwelling on his chest for a split second and then gazing downward with humility. "I don't know."



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Tony reached gallantly for her hand, pulling her to her feet. "Don't be afraid. What are you afraid of?" He caressed her left cheek. "Relax," he said in a soft, low voice, leading her away.

She followed, shrugging and squinting at Mark. "See you later."

"Do you like living in New Jersey?" Mark asked JoAnne, who was sitting across the room.

She nodded without enthusiasm.

"I'm an actor," he said. "I was in an off-Broadway play a few years back. You might have heard of it. *The Other Woman* was the name of it. Did you hear of it?"

She shook her head. "I don't like plays."

"I've been wondering about love," Mark said. "I mean, I always wonder about love." He smiled what he considered his cutest, most flirtatious smile. She looked bored. "I mean, I wonder if anybody can love anybody. What do you think about it?"

She shrugged. "I don't know," she said with impatience. "Why don't you come over here."

"Oh, sure," he laughed. "Why didn't I think of that?"

He sat beside her and began biting his fingernails. "Did you go to college?" he asked.

"No," she replied.

They sat in silence. Suddenly Mark stretched out his arms and sighed, and when he had completed the gesture, he rested his right arm around JoAnne's shoulder. She responded by turning to him with a wide open mouth, sticking her tongue deep into his throat. They fell on the floor, she on top of him.

In the other room Linda lay with her back to Tony, he leaning on one of his elbows, watching her. "Just relax," he said, running his fingers down one of her arms. The arm twitched and stiffened. "Here, let me take off your glasses," he said.

She held on. "No, please. I can't see without them."

"Well, you don't need to see," he said.

"Yes, I do," she said.

"Hey, baby, all we're going to do is ball a little," he said soothingly.

She shuddered.

"Don't you like my body?" he asked.

"It's all right. It's not that. I just—"

"Why don't you take off your glasses?" he said again, reaching for them.

"No!"

"Well, then at least turn around." He took her shoulders and tried to turn her. She latched on to the end of the bed.

"Excuse me," she said, getting up suddenly. "I have to go to the bathroom." She locked herself in.

Meanwhile Mark and JoAnne continued to kiss with much zeal. Finally she stopped and looked at him. "Do you think you could enter me now?"

"Well, no, not really," he said smiling shyly. "I have a little problem."

She looked at him without friendliness, as one might view a traitor. "Tony?" she said, standing up.

"Yeah, babe," he called from the back.

"Can I talk to you a minute?"

She went into the back. In a few minutes the two of them emerged and began dressing. "I'm sorry, but we don't think it will work out," Tony said to Mark. "Tell Linda good-by for me."

"I will," Mark said. "I will."

As soon as they were gone Linda came out of the bathroom, and she and Mark made love with more passion than they had for a long time. Then baby Marcy was crying and they both went to her and hugged her between them. Marcy looked from one to another, smiling gleefully.

"I'll feed her," Mark said.

"Sometimes you're so sweet," Linda said.

"Da-da?" Marcy said.

Back in New York Mark began to read the ads in *Backstage* and *Show Business*, searching for a role in a play that might be right for him. But he never found the right role and finally he began a stamp collection. Every night when he came home from work he cleared the easy chair and sat down with his stamp collection, inserting any new stamps and rearranging the old ones. Linda began taking ballet lessons twice a week, and on these nights Mark stayed home with Marcy. During this period of time Mark and Linda made love in many different positions, at many different times of the day, and at many different locales, and Marcy rarely ever cried.

Then, in the fall of that year, Linda, whose corduroy pants all had holes in the rears, grew emotional.

"What are you doing?" she asked in a quavering voice. "I said what are you doing?"

He was packing a suitcase.

"You're not leaving," she said.

"Yes I am," he answered.

"Oh, no you don't."

"Yes I do."

She began to take the clothes out of the suitcase and put them back into his chest of drawers. He calmly put them back into the suitcase. She put them back into the drawer.

"Linda," he announced. "You can't stop me. I've thought this over carefully for quite some time now and my mind's made up. This is the best thing for both of us, for the three of us, I mean."

She stood guard over the suitcase.

"Linda, I'm not kidding around. Now, get out of the way."

She wouldn't budge. He shoved her aside and stiff-armed her while he closed the suitcase. Then she grabbed the handle.

"Let go, you fool," he said.

"No," she answered.

He dragged her and the suitcase across the floor toward the front door. As he maneuvered the doorknob, she stole the suitcase away from him and ran back into the bedroom.

"Okay," he said. "That's it."

He grabbed the suitcase from her and pushed her into the closet, slamming and locking the door behind her. She kicked the door and screamed.

"Let me out of here, you son-of-a-bitching bastard! Let me out of here!" she screamed loudly enough to attract



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attention from neighbors. He had to let her out. She went straight for the suitcase again. He caught her and they fell to the ground, wrestling and scratching.

"Don't be stupid. Haven't you any pride?" he asked her.

"No, I have no pride," she answered proudly.

"You're making a fool of yourself."

"I like to make a fool of myself." She smiled fiendishly.

"You must."

"Anything you say."

"Linda, please let me go."

"No, I won't let you go."

"If only you could see yourself now, to see what a spineless fool you're making yourself into. Let me go! I'm not worth all this."

He stood up and tried to get the suitcase out from under her. She was sitting on it as though it were a dormant bronco.

"Linda, get off the suitcase. You're going to get me really angry in a minute, and then you'll regret it."

"Anything you say."

"Okay," he said calmly.

He picked her up and threw her across the room.

"You goddamn son-of-a-bitching bastard! I hate your guts! I hate you! I hate you!" she screamed, lying on the floor beneath the window, her fingers scratching the air.

The baby was crying.

Linda got slowly up and went into Marcy's room. He stood, suitcase in hand, waiting for her to return. The baby simmered down and Linda came out with Marcy in her arms.

"Well, what are you waiting for?" she said.

She sat on the couch, rocking the baby. He sat behind her.

"You'll be all right," he said. "We need to get away from each other for a while. I'm miserable and I make you miserable. You don't need me. It'll be good for you to be on your own. To see that you can be independent if you need to."

"You're probably right," she said.

"We can still see each other. We don't have to just break off completely."

"No, when you leave I don't want to see you any more," she said.

"I'll come watch the baby during your dancing lessons," he said.

"That's all right," she said. "I'll join a baby-sitting club."

"Well, then, good-by."

"Good-by."

He fell on her shoulder. "I can't take it any more," he whined. "Can't you understand that? My electric razor is broken. The handle on the refrigerator keeps coming off. The baby is always crying. We need a new needle for the phonograph. The filter in the fish tank is gurgling. You keep forgetting to take your birth control pills, and every month it's a new scare. We're a month behind on the rent, the electricity, the telephone bills. I have a rash of warts on my right thumb. Fuck it. I've got to do something...I've got to do something..."

She had her hand on his crotch.

"I understand," she said.

"I mean, I don't know," he said. "Maybe if you got a job and I could stay home some of the time and try to write a play. You always say you'll do it but you never do."

"I guess I could if you really wanted me to," she said.

She was unzipping his fly.

"I mean, maybe if I could just have a night off once in a while," he said. "You know, to scout around, maybe screw a few other girls, sow my oats, you know. I mean, I won't do it behind your back or anything. You can have a night off too."

"That's all right. I don't need one. But you can have one if you want."

Her hand had found its object.

"I don't want to leave," he said in a small voice.

"I know," she said.

He kissed her. She continued to rock the baby in her lap and caress him with her other hand. He hugged her tightly from behind, his eyes closed.

She took a job as a photographer's assistant. He stayed home and started several plays. As soon as she came home from work he would read her the first few pages of his newest play and she would laugh at it while she fixed dinner. But he never finished any of his plays and his stamp collection was torn up by Marcy and one of her playmates. They began to quarrel about his never cleaning the apartment, and Marcy was crying more now, even going so far as to develop a new phase during which she would choke and vomit in her crib. Mark resented this new tactic of Marcy's and one night, in a fit of rage, he rubbed her face in her own spew. Linda came to Marcy's defense and in the scuffle she received a bloody nose.

"I really think he ought to see a psychiatrist," she told her friend Madeline the next day as they chatted on the phone.

"He doesn't deserve you," Madeline said. "He's a fink. I don't know why you stay with him."

"I don't know. I guess I just love him," Linda said sweetly.

"You're a martyr," Madeline said. "You're a real martyr."

"I guess so," Linda answered, a small tear forming in the corner of her eye and dropping slowly down her cheek.

"You're so brave," Madeline said.

Linda glowed with serenity. "Oh, I don't know," she said, giggling.

Mark began a scrapbook of nude women, cutting pictures from the more sophisticated women's fashion magazines. Linda took up photography, converting one of the closets into a darkroom, accumulating many artistically grainy blow-ups of rocks and trees and cutely smiling children. Marcy learned to walk across the room and pull plugs out of electrical outlets. His parents wrote from Texas, hers from California, giving them lots and lots of advice about growing plants, buying diapers, and marvelous deals in the stock market. And they lived after. □



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# ABOUT SWEENEY

## A STORY BY ALYCE INGRAM

And you're just going to *love* Fin-Fin. Every bit as much as Nummy," Helen told Gerald rubbing him briskly after his bath. She was half-ready to go out (Kenneth's boss Sam Sweeney had invited them for cocktails) and now she knelt on the bathmat in satin slip and patted Gerald all over with talcum powder.

Gradually, in bits and blobs at studied moments whenever she felt he could assimilate it, she had tried to explain Miss Nunnaly's demise to him and this was to be the last, the absolute last reference to his dead baby-sitter: She and Kenneth had agreed on that much, at least.

Now she put the lamb's wool puff back into its blue box and she drew Gerald into the circle of her arms.

"Sweetheart," she said and tried to look directly into his eyes as he bobbed about. "Sweetie-Pie. Mummy wants you to understand so you must listen dear and pay attention and let loose of Mummy's earring. You are not to coax for Nummy when Fin-Fin takes care of you. It would make Fin-Fin feel bad. Because even though she has never seen you, she loves you very much. Every bit as much as Num-Num did because they were such good friends. So you must forget all about Num-Num now and sit on the potty and make pee-pee while I finish dressing as Daddy tells me about Sweeney which he's been trying to do since he got home from the office but you've been such a *pest*."

Gerald blipped in Helen's face and snatched at her left earring.

Helen retaliated with a playful pinch on his rump and then held him close but he wriggled from her grasp and almost, but not quite, got away.

They played the game nightly. Gerald, after a brief tussle, would always finally get an earring and drop it into the tub and Helen would pretend to be very angry.

Now Gerald freed himself and hid behind the door and Helen pulled him around and tried to dry his hair but he immediately began snatching at the earring.

Helen dodged and squatted on her heels almost toppling over backwards.

Gerald, his eyes a-glitter, moved in close and squealed triumphantly as he yanked off Helen's earring and threw it into the tub. Helen promptly gave him a quick pat on the bottom then immediately nestled him close and they exchanged moist mouth-to-mouth kisses.

Suddenly sober, Helen stood up and pulled her slip into place.

"You almost hurt Mummy that time," she said severely. "Next time you mustn't be so rough. You must learn to be—"

"Finished with the horse-play?" Kenneth called from the bedroom where he was getting dressed. "I want to tell you about Sweeney before we get there."

"Coming," Helen called back and then she pointed a finger at Gerald and said, "Now listen, Fella. If you aren't nice to Fin-Fin she won't come back. Ever. So I'll expect you to behave and not pull any of your shenanigans. See?"

And she set Gerald on the stool and strapped him in.

"Fin-Fin," Gerald carolled reaching for his toes.

"Ken. Ken," Helen called excitedly. "Did you hear that? Did you hear? Come quick."

Kenneth, who was by now all dressed except for his shoes, came to the bathroom door carrying a drink.

"Hear what?" he asked. "...What I started to say was Sweeney called me in and he said he didn't want to take any calls for the next half hour and—"

"It's absolutely marvelous," Helen said pointing to Gerald. "He called her Fin-Fin. All on his own. Did you ever?"

"Not lately," Kenneth said and he drained his glass. "Do you suppose she'll mind? Some people don't like nicknames."

"Mind," Helen almost screamed. "She'll be delighted. Especially when I tell her he made it up himself."

Kenneth returned to the bedroom without answering and Helen ordered Gerald to make choo-choo and she gave him an earring to play with and she followed Kenneth to the bedroom and took her green dress from its hanger and slipped it over her head and backed up to Kenneth to be zipped.

Afterwards she let out her breath.

"You sound like you've been running away from something," Kenneth said. "Why don't you save some of your energy for me."

Helen held up a warning finger. "Little pitchers," she said.

"Christ," Kenneth said. "He's only—"

"You can't be too careful," Helen said. "They catch on faster than you'd think." And she sat down at the vanity.

"I hope she works out," she said.

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*ALYCE INGRAM is a regular guest here. Recent stories are also in* MUNDUS ARTIUM *and* MEDITERRANEAN REVIEW.



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"Works out?" Kenneth repeated putting on his shoes.

"Fin-Fin," Helen said.

"Oh. Well, I hope so, too," Kenneth said. "It's been a long time since we went out. Well, then he closed the door and he offered me a chair and he said—"

Helen put a plastic cape around her shoulders.

"When I think of how devoted they were to one another. The way he had her wrapped around his finger. Sometimes I almost think it's better if they're not too...attached...."

Kenneth pulled his shoe lace hard.

It broke.

He studied the piece of lace in his hand.

"How so?" he asked.

Helen wet a little finger and ran it across her eyebrow.

"Well," she said slowly. "The loss is that much greater if they...."

"Not when they're that young," Kenneth said opening the drawers of his chest and rummaging around. "Anyhow, she's dead and nothing will bring her back so the less said the better. We agreed."

Helen shuddered.

She never used the word *dead* or *died* unless referring to animals or strangers. Even when they'd come home from the movies that night and found poor Miss Nunnaly dead on the davenport Helen had remembered not to run to the garage screaming.

She'd kept her head and gone quietly to Kenneth's side and said very deliberately so as not to upset Gerald who'd wakened and tagged along, "You'll have to call someone. Nummy is gone."

And it had given Kenneth something of a shock, he told friends. The very thought of coming home in the middle of the night and learning that the baby sitter had gone off and left his son alone and unattended. And it wasn't until he'd dashed in the house and found out for himself what Helen meant that he'd relaxed—hardly admitting even now that a dead baby-sitter was better than no baby-sitter at all where it happened in your own family.

"Wasn't it marvelous. Her telephoning," Helen said as she outlined her lips afresh. "Mmm...I mean. How many people would think of it."

Kenneth did not answer. He was looking out of the window still holding the segment of shoe lace in his hand.

Helen swung around gesturing with her lipstick.

"You aren't even listening. You didn't answer. I said—"

"I know what you said," Kenneth answered but he did not turn around.

"Well look at me," Helen ordered and Kenneth turned around. "I mean. How many people would think about the difficulty of replacing a baby-sitter. You'd almost have to go through an agency or something. And that's so impersonal. Aren't you even relieved? So we can go off and have a good time for a change. I thought it was what you wanted."

"Well, I don't have anything against those agencies," Kenneth said. "Don't they register them or something? Now about Sweeney—"

Helen studied the pink facsimile of her lips on a piece of white facial tissue.

"Would you rather I'd called one," she asked finally.

"One what?" Kenneth asked spinning the piece of shoelace.

"Well what are we talking about?" she said. "If you'd stop babbling about Sweeney and try to take an interest in things around here it would make it a whole lot easier I can tell you that much. He's your child too, you know."

"Christ Almighty," Kenneth said. "Where's a shoelace?"

"If that isn't the height of immaturity," Helen said. She applied her false eye-lashes before answering him. "Look in the kitchen drawer next to the sink...he's yelling...go see if he made a choo-choo. If so, take him off. I might still have time to read before she comes."

"I'll read. Go find me a lace," Kenneth said leaving the room.

"*I Love Little Pussy*," Helen called after him. "He's got my earring. Sneak it away so he doesn't cry."

"Frew," Gerald wailed loudly from the bathroom.

"And don't mention Num-Num," Helen whispered chasing Kenneth half-way down the hall and catching him before he turned the corner.

"Fin-Fin. Num-Num. Choo-Choo," Kenneth said under his breath.

Helen returned to the vanity and sprayed her hair and after a few moments Kenneth came back.

"Says he's not frew—through," he said. "None in the drawer. We'll stop on the way."

Now the doorbell rang.

Helen jumped up. "I'll go," she said. "No...you go...no, we'll go together...looks better first time. More united... where's my earring?"

"He dropped it in the john," Kenneth said. "And he made some marbles so I left it."

Helen pressed fingers to temples.

"It was all so orderly until you tried to distract me," she said. "I had everything arranged...now I can't think. You go to the door. No...we'll both...she'll come in...take him off the choo-choo train...we'll hide behind the door...peek through the crack...see how they adjust...then slip out...."

"Frew," Gerald howled and he began to cry.

The doorbell rang again, this time peremptorily.

Helen stood stock still in the middle of the room, squeezed her eyes tightly shut, compressed her lips and rapped her knuckles together three times. Suddenly she grabbed Kenneth's hand and propelled him to the front door where Miss Finwick marched in and took over from the moment she crossed the threshold almost sweeping them out of the house before they had a chance to even sneak away.

Kenneth said as he backed out the car, "We'll have to pick one up at the drugstore."

Helen said, "I feel uneasy...that's twice this month he made marbles...hard and green...and he was crying so hard... what if he holds his breath...she didn't give me a chance to tell her anything...maybe we should have called an agency..."

"He'll be fine," Kenneth said as they moved forward. "Now about Sweeney—"

And he rested his hand momentarily on Helen's thigh.

"I miss him already," Helen said.

And she moved aside. □



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A Story by Steve Garmisa

*STEVE GARMISA is a young Chicagoan. This is his first published story.*

# HUNTING

*The kids in the Karate class were barefoot. Their robes, belts, and baggy pants were white. They stood around waiting while the instructor talked to my father.*

No one else in our hunting party was dressed like a hunter.

Twenty-three year old Cousin Guy was dressed for skiing, Dad for shovelling the walk, and my ten year old brother Tiger for going to school.

I was thirteen and warmly bundled in a new sheepskin coat. With the help of my mother I was dressed in a hunter's uniform: Levi blue jeans, a plaid wool Saks Fifth Avenue shirt, a cowhide belt with a big silvered buckle and my dark brown hunting boots. The boots had a dull healthy shine from the saddle soap I religiously applied once a week while I watched the "Man From U.N.C.L.E."

*At 15 Roy, a greaser, sometimes drove a motorcycle to school. Larry was the Captain of the Hall Guards and I was his Lieutenant. On winter days Roy would drive up shortly after 8:45 and park a block away. There would always be a crowd waiting to enter the building, but we weren't supposed to open the doors until the bell rang. I could see Roy walking down the middle of the barricaded street. He wore the kind of hat precinct captains wear. The brim was turned down. He had taken it from an old man one Sunday in Humboldt Park. Roy wore a thigh-length black leather jacket, baggies, black leather gloves, and black combat boots. He had long fuzzy sideburns that were just developing.*

*Every time I went shopping with my mother I would plead for a black leather jacket, but I guess she didn't want me to be a greaser. Ma always used to say that a black leather jacket was too expensive, and then we would go to Saks Fifth Avenue and we would buy me corduroy pants that came with their own leather belts and $30 Italian shoes. But never any of the shit-kicking boots that almost all of my friends had.*

*"Lemme in," Roy said through the wired window in the door. I was leaning on an inner door and I moved to open the outer one, but not too quickly. I didn't want Roy to think that he could push me around easily. I kicked the door open. No one else came in with Roy. I leaned against a wall. Larry and Roy joked around. Then Roy came up to me with an icepick in his right hand. The handle was perpendicular to the blade, so he could hold it in a clenched fist with the metal coming out between his two middle fingers. Roy was a head taller than me. He put the point of the icepick on my chest and asked in his Tennessee dirt farmer's drawl, "What would you do if I stabbed you with this?"*

*"I'd kick you in the balls."*

*He laughed and said, "Well chickenshit, you just try to kick me in the balls and we'll see what happens."*

*"Lieberman," Larry warned and Roy put the icepick away. Mr. Lieberman, the gym teacher, came over to us and asked what Roy was doing in the building so early. "I was cold," he explained.*

*Larry and I lost our jobs that day.*

The clouds were wispy scales the day I went to kill for the first time. Like the skin of a snake. The sky was gray with orange near the horizon. The skin was slashed by the vapor lancet a jet airplane dragged across the sky.

We drove from one world into another in our big black leather-upholstered Buick. From Division Street to the Kennedy Expressway to the Dan Ryan Expressway to Chicago Heights and then from Lincoln Highway to State Highway 1 which took us through places like Momence, Saint Ann, and Watseka. I joked about the size of the towns we passed through by saying things like, "We are now entering Watseka population 5,219 we are now leaving Watseka."

In Watseka the natural scene looked as if it had been added like a thick coating of make-up to cover the blemishes of State Highway 1, telephone poles, high voltage cable towers, airplanes, and cars.

I was going to hunt pheasants. Along the way I sniped at telephone pole insulators, high voltage cable towers, airplanes, and cars.

*In the seventh grade we had departmental. That meant we changed teachers and classrooms with subjects. It gave us time to be rowdy in the halls and to ditch if we wanted to. My homeroom was moving up to the third floor. In my back pocket I had a vestpocket dictionary. I felt somebody lift it. "What the fuck is this?" Roy asked, looking it over. "A dictionary. Fucking Jew," he said throwing it down a flight of stairs.*

*I went down to get it and said not too loudly as I picked it up, "Damn Hillbilly." Jerry heard me and asked, "Do you want me to tell Roy what you called him?"*

*"I don't care what you tell that jerk."*

*So he ran up the stairs two at a time, probably smiling, and whispered to Roy. We were the only class in the hall. Our teacher was late. The class was lined up against the wall before the classroom door.*

*Roy grabbed me by the shirt with both hands and*



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*lifted me up into the air. "Do ... you ... know ... what ... a Hillbilly ... is?" he asked, pounding me against the wall in cadence to the words. "A Hillbilly ... is ... a ... fucking ... hill ... billy ... But I ain't no Hillbilly ... I'm ... a ... Tennessee ... Dirt ... Farmer ... not ... a Hillbilly. You got that?" he asked dropping me to my feet.*

Tiger was vocally slaughtering all the cattle we passed.

I was sweating. Dreams and memories broiled in my mind. I got up and dressed in my black leather jacket, fedora, baggies, and black combat boots. I opened the window and walked along the ledge to the back stairwell. I carried the German rifle my father had brought back from the war on my back. On the top floor I stood on the garbage can and climbed through the little door to the roof. The whole block was three-story apartment buildings. All I had to do was jump the gap from building to building. At one end of the block was a building that was diagonally opposite from where Roy lived. I just waited until he walked into the front room and shot him once in the head.

Sometimes when I couldn't sleep I just shot out streetlights from my bedroom window.

We stopped at the G and W Sports Shop just past Watseka. It was off the highway. Next to it, in the same building, was the Top Hat Bar. There was a door between them. The only other structure to be seen was the Ace Cycle Shop across the road. Dense woods came near the road. The sun had rocketed into the sky, but the sky was still gray. We went into the sports shop. From there Dad went into the bar to use the public telephone. Cousin Guy went to the counter to ask for shells. The store was filled with guns, fishing tackle, bows, arrows, and all the paraphernalia that people use on animals. The man behind the counter was winding a fishing reel. Behind him was a group picture of some soldiers. Several stuffed animals were fastened to the walls.

Guy asked for three-inch magnum shells with No. 6 shot. As he reached for them the man behind the counter asked, "What ya going to be hunting today?"

"Pheasant."

"Pheasant?" he asked setting the carton down on the counter. "I thought maybe you was going after Russian missiles or something."

"Well, these kids aren't experienced and I want them to have a chance to get a bird."

"Don't worry. With these shells those birds are gonna have two chances; a slim one and a poor one."

"Well, hunting's hunting."

"I guess so."

Dad came back and said, "I talked to Uncle Claude's friend Mr. Weaver and he's coming right over to take us to his hunting preserve. Now you kids stay here and Cousin Guy and I'll be right back."

Tiger and I went to the magazine rack. I looked at an issue of "Karate Photo-World." On the cover was a photograph of two guys with long sideburns. One was being kicked while he tried to smash the other guy with a black-gloved fist. I looked at all the photos of experts flying through the air, firing their feet like missiles and their fists like pistols. Then I went through the magazine again and read an editorial titled, "Today's Advanced Society and Its Bewildered Youth."

Guy's gun was a lightweight 20-guage Browning semi-automatic. Its dull black metal impressed me more than the shiny black of a limousine that has a low license plate number.

Dad came to get Tiger and me when a middle-aged man drove up in a station wagon. There were several crates in the back.

They traded hello's and Dad asked, "Fred, do you think we can give these kids an idea of what hunting is all about?"

"I think we can give them a little taste of it."

We followed Mr. Weaver to a field. The road took us right to the middle of it. At one end there was a rusty old gray Chevy without wheels. A ripped-up seat cushion leaned against it. Oxidizing engine parts were lying near it. Where we stopped we could look right through the car's back window to where the front windshield should have been.

Mr. Weaver unloaded four crates from his station wagon. There was a pheasant in each crate. They were all brown camouflage-colored females. The door of each crate was pointed away from the cars.

Dad was first. I opened the crate. The bird flew with the uncoordinated-looking fury of an animal frightened beyond self-control. Dad fired once and missed.

Cousin Guy took the gun. He pointed it down so that he would have to swing and aim suddenly. I opened another door. The bird flew. Guy whipped the gun up and rapidly fired three times. The bird got away.

Dad took the gun again. Amid two shots the bird got away.

"Dad," I asked, "Can't I have a chance?" Tiger didn't even ask to try. Dad told me that I was too young to handle a gun in a hunting situation and that I should just watch and see how it was done. "Please, If I can't shoot at the bird let me shoot at a target."

"All right," he relented.

I looked toward the abandoned car and Mr. Weaver said, "O.K." and I blasted the rear window out with three shots.

Cousin Guy tried a final time. He pointed the gun in the direction that the bird would take. I opened the door and the bird flew as they all had. The first shot, a little to the left, knocked it down. Cousin Guy ran over to it. The bird was flapping its good wing. After staring at it for a moment Guy stepped back. I went up to the bird and stomped on it. Once on its neck and once on its head. Blood spurted from the skull. A few drops splashed on my boots.

*The barefoot instructor had a black belt over his white robe. Dad told him that I wanted to take Karate lessons because I was being pushed around at school.*

*"Do you want to be pushed around all your life?" the instructor asked. "If you don't you've got to start pushing back now. And Karate is the way to do it."*

*I nodded.*

*He talked price and class times with Dad. We left and I never mentioned Karate lessons again.* □



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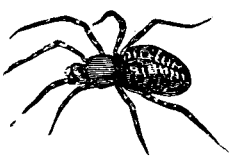
Paul Petrie

# CHILDHOOD MEMORY

"Are you there, spider?" we said, hurling flies still buzzing
into that trembling web.
And sure enough—
first at the spiral hole, then with sudden pounce
which always surprised, invisible ballet steps,
out he would come, examine the proffered gift,
inject the poison neatly behind the neck
and parcel up the body.
For days we fed
fly after fly into those gossamer strands,
our hands poised upon walls, the pores of walks,
the hot, enameled, shining tops of rails,
till the flies were all used up.
And the web grew dark
with the shrouded bodies of flies (some slowly withering
in the speckled eye of the sun, their blood unsucked)
and the spider slower to come.
And then one day
did not.
"Are you there, spider?" we said, hurling
pebbles, beetles, ants, small bits of stick
into that bulging net, hungry to see
once more that ballet leap, those closing jaws,
the neatly shrouded corpse, until the web
sagged with the weight
and broke—
and with our hands
we swept it away.
And still no spider came.





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*D. L. W. SMITH has published poetry in a number of magazines, including this one, but this is her first fiction in the* NAR. *She lives in Baton Rouge.*

A Story by D. L. W. Smith

# The Volunteer

He carries his flesh before him like a lung. It is a fruit, huge and pallid, as in skin. We always call to him.

"One by one. One by one. We are coming far away in knowledge. Why do you come again?"

Eagerly. On Wednesdays we watch for him. We have always found the lawns here dim and of poor quality. They impede our view. We cannot see far beyond them.

We form an edge around him. We meet him at the lawn. We are like a rind about him. He hates now to come.

He hears our tongues moving far away in darkness. He cringes like a deer. We are like bells. My friend rings out to him.

"My brother has a knife. Doctor, he sees into the wind. Each day he comes here."

Clearly, this troubles him. He is not really a doctor. He is an old man. We are his evening class. Someone says he is a volunteer.

The trees divide into the wind. The spotted dogs bark. Far away they curl their lips into the corrugated stream. We are with him step for step. We run with him across the lawn. We are running across the lawn.

My friend says, "Once, in that other time, bright bottles clashed into basking yards. They were dangerous to dogs and other living animals. Doctor, were you ever a dog? Were you ever another living animal?" She presses close to him. "The dogs raced *wildly* to the end."

I am not as sick as my friend. I do not tell mad things to old gentlemen. She will be here many, many years.

We are coming into the circle of light. We are pressing into our yellow squares. Without advice, we assume our places. We are very near the lobby of our ward. It is so close none of us fear to come.

He hesitates, asking, "Where did we leave off last time?"

My neighbor wants to walk about the room. Because she is very strong, we know she does not have to ask. To the doctor she says, "Doctor, in my room I have many beds. In each is a box. They are of poems. I have preserved your lectures there also, sir. One of them begins: 'When neon grapes fall/ on timely articles/ beyond the hearing of your carved/ mahogany deep grins ...' "

Someone, a nurse, gestures her down. We all clap. We laugh. We have all been taught to be ourselves. He is frightened again. His knowledge does not reach this ledge. He cannot judge its span. Our intensities prevail into his fastness. It is below his mind.

Frightened, he has seen our perceptions behind our cunning, which our fingers call our faces so bravely and our eyes. Slyly, we hold up our hands. They are to our heads. We look round. We take turns. We grin. We know he is scared.

"We are coming one by one. One by one." We speak softly to him.

I laugh loudly at the antics of my friends. This is like all classes again. I have been in many classes many years. These are all my friends.

He is a very old man. Limp words hang from his mouth; sounds die at the base of his tongue. His rim of thought has dropped beneath the circle of his gums.

"You are all dumb!" The tree of his thought snaps briskly.

We have all seen it. We look around at one another again. We are all pleased. His words have filled out like the wind. If we are like patients, this must be therapy then. Even the nurse will not side with him if he gives in.

"Remember, class, we cannot write what we do not know . . ." He falters. He does not know what we may not know.

What is it that he does not know? What is it that we do not know? We are puzzled. We look around at one another. We are searching again. He turns another page. This time it is in his memory. He is surprised to find it blank. He looks quickly away. He knows we will be critical of his pain. He knows we do not have to pretend to him. We have always presumed him sane.

We are becoming tranquilized by his motions, our faces and our hands. Side by side our lips are folded, and our teeth are grooved.

He is becoming certain of his pain.

"Familiar objects burn like epiphanies. The class must realize that. You must realize that, class. You must realize something. Can you hear what I say? Why can't you hear what I say?"

His face is old and tired. We are making him seem far away. We are in one place being everything. Our trunks were unpacked here long ago. We are now prepared to stay.

"I get no pay. Do you realize that?"

The class is rolling back like a sneer. Now we are telling ourselves we are not here. We are becoming farther away.

"I have taught you nothing. For which I get no pay. There is no reason to connect me with the entire of your being here. Why don't you listen to what I say? I do not care what you say. What you don't say. I am not paid. You are not satisfied, and I am not here. Is that clear? Your flesh is like exhumed consciousness and annoys me. I



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would not come here again, not even for pay. There is no other explanation, and none needs be given. There is no memory where no memory belongs."

Now even he does not hear himself. We stop becoming far away. Our heads are stuffed like boxes. Our minds crowd out like tubes. Our boundaries swell beyond our foreheads. We cannot be taught.

"You cannot be taught!"

He has tried vainly to go beyond this boundary. Our lessons peak.

"The red fields and home stretching away into roads. Winter bending like a branch touching your brittle passing cheeks . . . this *I* cannot give you. Why can't you realize that. Class! Class! The hood of consciousness is fashionable but incredible to wear!"

We have searched for him everywhere, presuming him sane. He knows now we cannot be fair. That is, perhaps, one reason we are here. We are always going far away from him. This time we have gone too far. We are all relieved. For many months now we have been growing tired.

"This time you have gone too far!"

His feet are old and solid. His face is flat and near. His hair has yellow streaks like dirty wool. My friend leaps to her feet.

"Your edges, flapped and twisting, have broken in my face. FLICK!"

We all laugh at this. He is shaking now. Violently in the head. He has had many classes many years. We wonder if he has ever feared like this. We, also, have been someone's business many years. The summers; the winters; in spring the fields stretching away like years. Most of us have been here many years indeed.

"This teacher." Someone rises behind me in anger. "I cannot conceive him. I have seen many things. I have seen the beasts in sunset. I have seen them turn their horns upon the year. Yet this man *I do not see*! Why can't he speak to me? I wait. He speaks. I do not hear. Why does he come? Can't anyone be near me? It has been many months now since he first came. If this is charity, I no longer care to hear!"

The nurse moves her silently beyond the room. Some of us are not so sick as the others.

His angry lights fade softly, wave on wave, from the roofs, our heads. It is night. He leaves in his old way. Across the lawn. Through the dark. We want to run with him. We are like dogs. We have always been like someone's dogs. Perhaps he has always been searching for a dog. Perhaps he has always been afraid to find us.

"The lawn is swollen with the dark. Doctor, we are sounding like stone. Will you come again. We are like the silent teeth of stone. *We have no throat.* Doctor, why did the spotted dogs bark into the wind? Why tonight?"

Slyly, we have counted our side. Outwardly we have taken great pains to resemble nothing. All our teachers have left. Soon perhaps no one will volunteer. My friend stands by my side. Softly, she says:

"This time I am not surprised. Even my brother died. Perhaps, next year, we can name a Christmas after him!"

She is very, very ill. □

Stephen Dobyns

## CHANGING MY MIND

Discontent is the roof of the house
in which I live. Each wall is boredom.
Each floor is indifference. This is the place
I am leaving. From my attic window,
I watch two poems fight it out
with knives in the front yard. Darkness
rises from them. I built this house
and all its entertainment. Now I am going.
Builders crawl toward me on white bellies.
What would I do with your new walls?
All my poems are fighting in the street.
They do not see me as I sneak down
the back stairs and out the door. The smell
of freshly cut grass sweeps over me. The sun
wraps me in color. I feel like an animal
that has gotten free. I run down the road
like a thin dog chasing a red truck.
I won't come back.



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# ROCK AND ROLL STAR

## A Story by T. Coraghessan Boyle

ONSTAGE

The stage is dark, lit only by the red eyes of the Amps. Equipment men scuttle about, squatting, bouncing on their calves, waddling backward like crabs: tapping, plugging, adjusting. Then the band sifts out from the dark wings—just shadows—but the crowd senses them, applause begins. A full four minutes later, Ian sweeps out onto the darkened stage: the roar is like mountains toppling.

chicka-chicka Chick chicka-chicka Chick-TSsssshhhhh chickata-chicka Chick—the drums hiss from the darkness; and then the band comes in on a heaving, screeching chord, the lights go up full, and Ian, a puppet with St. Vitus' Dance, goes wild. Violently contorts his body to the beat of the drum, the throb of the bass—leaping frenziedly about the stage, the red cape flapping behind. The tambourine stings and chatters against his thigh, the checkered court jester's tights strain at the crotch stuffed with handkerchiefs, his hair floats on the breeze with each jump. Super-amplified, the animal excitement fills the hall, filters down into the wood of the seats, penetrates flesh: the pulse of the music like the violent, consuming rhythm of sex.

The spot full on him, Ian comes in with that hoarse, teasing voice and the roar is so great that he can't be heard, the band can't be heard, the mammoth speakers stand mute—drowned in an avalanche of human sound. Pounding hands, strident whistles, frantic, furious bellowings. Then they rush the stage, surge around it. A thousand hands snatch at his ankles but he's oblivious, stoned, pirouetting over them. A young girl springs from the tangle of hands up onto the stage to grab for him but she's cut off by the weight-lifter who rushes from the dark wings, lifts her like a rag and tosses her out into the swarm of dark heads, white arms. Ian dances, sucks at the microphone, shouts the blues—a lewd, bad-breed leer on his face.

AN INTERVIEW

He is beleaguered by gleaming quills, microphones, jabbed at him. The stroboscopic blinking of flash bulbs whitens his face. His name is shouted repeatedly, questions begun endlessly: "Ian! Ian! Ian—When will? How do you feel about? What are your? Ian!" Finally a question registers; he will speak; the mob falls to silence. They jockey for position, the mikes stabbing in, parrying, falling back. Grinning, swaying, blear-eyed, he answers: "About a quarter century." They are silent for a moment, then all at once start shouting questions again.

Q. The *Times* said your film was a puerile and barbaric trip into sado-masochism, violence and narcissism. Have you any comment? A. Yes. I find the *Times* most useful on the hallway carpet—it prevents the dog from dirtying the rug. Q. What ingredients go into lasagna? A. Tomato sauce, chopped meat, No. 2 flat macaroni, cottage, ricotta and mozarella cheeses. Q. How long do you plan to stay in this country? A. Oh . . . three or four. Q. How much is 86 times 15? A. Twelve-hundred-ninety. Q. Who was the thirteenth president of the United States? A. Millard Fillmore. Q. Will you continue singing, or will you give it up to concentrate on films? A. I—and you can quote me on this—I will build a banana boat and sail off across tangerine seas. Q. You have no comment then? A. Yes, I have a comment. Take your silver wands and stick them up your silver

Here the interview ends.

AT HOME

He is arrogant, elegant, precocious. Thoroughly spoiled. His home is a fairybook mansion: the roof is glass, the floor shaggy with white alpaca, the walls decorated with photographs of himself. The playthings (Rolls, Lamborghini, Harley) are in the garage. He keeps a staff of ten, a French cook. His neighbors are members of Parliament, the Nobility, the Impossibly Wealthy.

He is sitting in the salon, in a chair by the fountain, his leg dangling over the side. He wears a washed-out denim jacket, patched dungarees, moccasins. "It's not the money," he says. "Or the renown either." He takes a long pull from the cut-glass goblet and turns to look you in the eye. His are latticed with red. "It's the power. When I walk out on that stage, I know how Mussolini must have felt. That roar—all of them screaming for ME. I smile, sing a couple bars, shake my ass—fart for christsake—and they go wild. They howl so it shakes the stage, drowns out our big PA's—it fills your throat, like tears or sex or rage. I can't describe the feeling. When I'm up there, I feel like Christ, flown from the cross and hovering about twenty feet over Golgotha."

WITH A YOUNG FAN

The girl is fourteen. Though dressed from this morning's fashion mags, she looks like Bambi given human form. All eyes, aesthenic wrist and gladiola bulbs for breasts. They are alone in the hotel room. She darts about him, shrieking, ripping shards of silky cloth from his shirt, like a lone piranha. She rips with her teeth and her tiny shiny nails. Soon his shirt, then his pants, and finally his red silk underwear lie like football pennants at his feet. He stands still, naked and erect, in the center of the room. The frail girl, exhausted now from the sustained frenzy, lies panting in the armchair. "Can I have your autograph?" she asks.

"Certainly," he replies.



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A DREAM

He is a young boy, dreaming of falling. He is not falling—instead, everything else is falling: photographs, curled at the edges, swirling down like dead leaves; sheets of scribbled lyrics; alpaca rugs; the piano. He watches them from the falling bed of his youth (now stationary.) They fall a great distance, sailing out from him, attentuating to specks against the great, glowing ball below. The ball? He can't quite make it out but now it seems to be swelling toward him, growing increasingly larger, a head floating up from the mud at the bottom of a deep lake. It is a head, smooth and hairless. He recognizes the face. His own.

ON ART

When I was younger, in sixth form, I thought I would like to be an artist, a painter. And I used to strut around for a long while there, thinking I was a painter. I would bust my ass painting those things, all alone up in my room and I would bring them down and hang them on the walls. Then people would come over and say things like, "That's really nice" or "I love it!" So I got discouraged. Then I got into music with Nigel and Ken. We would get up on-stage at those small clubs, and do it right there. And the audience would howl for more. They really dug what we were doing—and they let us know it.

HIS AGENT COMMENTS: IAN'S CHARISMA

Listen, if Jesus Christ Himself walked out on that stage he couldn't generate more excitement. The boy is a natural—a five-foot-eleven-inch cock. Every chick in the audience wants to ball him, every guy sees himself up there, with that kind of machismo. It don't matter what lyrics he sings, it's sex he's talking about, it's sex he's dancing about up there. Sure we promote the bad-ass side—that's what they want. They've been fed this goody-good crap ever since they were born and they're damned sick of it. What they want is somebody who never was a good boy and never will be—and that's Ian. The devil side of life—evil, sex, death—that's what this blues trip is all about. And believe me we play it up. One time we even pulled a trick from some of the old colored bluesmen—wheeled a coffin out onstage and Ian popped out screaming the blues—some shit about the Death Angel and Ballin' his Baby. Let me tell you, they ate it up. I've seen kids maul one another just to get a goddam Kleenex he blew his nose in; I've seen them lined up in the rain for days, hoping to get a ticket to one of his shows; I've seen them go down on their knees and cry at the sight of him. When that kid walks out on that stage, he's got more power than ten emperors. If he told them to go out and rip down the city, by jesus they'd heave up in one mass of muscle and raze the place. That's charisma.

AT THE AUTO SHOW

A Rolls-Royce Silver Phantom, 1933. The short RR salesman, pinched and dignified with his eighteen-bristle moustache, stands to the side, warning inquisitive fingers off the gleaming finish. Ian is there, dressed in torn boots, an old fisherman's sweater and paint-stained pants. He likes big cars. He slips through the crowd, steps over the rope and into the car.

"Here!" shouts the salesman, "we can't have this."

"How much?" Ian asks from inside, the door closed and locked, window rolled up.

"Twenty-Three-Thousand Dollars!" shouts the little man, tugging at the door handle. "Twenty-Three-Thousand Dollars!"

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*T. CORAGHESSAN BOYLE was in our pages last year with his first story. Since then he has moved to Iowa City, where he is putting together a collection of short fiction.*



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Ian kicks open the door and begins counting from a book-thick wad of bills: "One, two, three, four, five . . ." The bills snap fresh and new into the salesman's supine palm.

ON DRUGS

No, I'm not on drugs. I don't think drugs are a good thing for a kid to get into. Sure I do a little dope sometimes, everybody does. It's just knowing when to stop. In an average day? Oh, spoon of meth with my breakfast somewhere around two, I guess. Tab of sunshine about an hour later. Snort coke most of the afternoon—see, I do all my up heads early, to get me moving. Then around tea time I start getting mellowed out for the concert or recording session or jam—whatever we got planned. I start off with two bags, good stuff—it takes the edge off of all that speedy shit, you know? And then, just before I go on, I usually cook up another bag with a good taste of coke. Later, when it's time to crash, I hit the cognac and the tuinols. Nothing too heavy, you see? All of that drug business is just a pernicious fan magazine fabrication.

AT THE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

His walk is more like a dance, a fluid ballet, a black man's studied bop. Every sinew alive with rhythm, each synapse beating time to a different signature. He sweeps into the ward with the lewd grace of a panther bitch in heat, the long purple cape swishing behind him, the magenta knee-boots silent as the footfall of a deer. Then from all around him comes the peep of subdued glee, laughter cut off like limbs; and the scrape of crutches, the rattle of wheel chairs. Like a metal forest in motion they gather around him, painfully, methodically: an impossibly shrunken human being forming the nucleus of each nest of gleaming bars. Some wheel, some hobble, some crawl: but they surround him, press in on him, whining out for his autograph, the tiny twisted hands pulling at his cloak, his pants, the suede lacings of his boots.

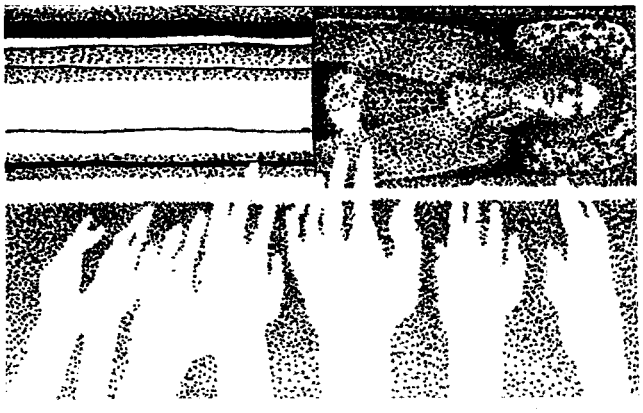
He stands motionless, lets them feel him, pull at him—a hundred shrunken, uncertain hands. His eyes are on the ceiling, the lewd wet lips parted, the aureole of hair catching the light from the window, reflecting it on his face. And then, *a capella*, he begins a song. The high, pure voice swells, fills the room: achingly.

A LYRIC

This is one of the new tunes we're doing. Well actually it's an old Delta blues thing by Preacher Boy Funk. It goes like this:

Sometimes I feel
Like the Death Angel's
Callin' for me
Whoa Mama,
Callin' for me

Just doan know
What I done to be born



ON THE PLANE

The stewardess doesn't want to wake him, so she steps over his feet, sprawled in the aisle. His head is thrown back, the frayed, sweaty hair trailing down behind the headrest. Two spearheads of white skull dig far back into the hairline in front. Lines, hidden onstage by the makeup and the lights, channel his forehead, his neck, web his eyes. Stale saliva dribbles from the corner of his open mouth.

A second stewardess comes by with a tray. She shakes him. "Would you like a cocktail, Sir?"

"Huh?" he says.

A REFLECTIVE MOMENT

They say I'm a pop hero, the leader of a generation . . . I can dig that, but sometimes I feel like I can't go on with it anymore. I'm twenty-nine now. Most of the audience is half that. Compared to them, I'm an old geek. What am I going to do in ten years? I mean, bread I've got—that's no problem. But what am I going to do?

ALONE ON A COUNTRY ROAD

The Rolls lies behind him, hissing in the heat, its tires half-moons in the deep sand. Vultures pick at the chauffeur's slithering inner organs. Life, in this sun, is self-immolation. Ian staggers, shedding clothes, the air-conditioned cubicle and frosted gin rickeys dead behind him. Dry, rattling creatures swish and swirl over his bare feet in the

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hot sand; his eyelids are sun-burned and puffed with fluid; he is anguished with thirst. And then, in the distance, the sun seems to be sitting at ground level, blazing back at him. It is a reflection. As he draws nearer, he recognizes a house. Futuristic, daring: all angles and glass. Inside, an ancient man with a yellowed head. Ian stumbles, gasping, to the glass door. "Help me!" he moans.

The bald man, the old one, stares dispassionately from behind the glass door.

"Save me, please." He is on one knee, his hands straining at the knob of the locked door. "I'm Ian Light, the singer—I'll pay you well. Look." His trembling fingers dig into his pockets, spew bills on the smooth doorstep. "Take it. But I beg you, something to drink! A sip of lemonade, a chocolate egg-cream, a vodka gimlet. Anything!"

The yellowed dome is tessellated with blue veins. They speak of obstinance, implacability. The old one spits from the glass window beside the door.

Instantly, Ian is on the ground, sucking at the spot of yellow sputum. At the same time it begins, in his mind—the incessant repetition of the blues lyric, over and over, a record stuck in a groove: "The Death Angel's/Callin' for me . . ." His hands scrabble frantically for a stone in the hot sand. Real panic now. They seize finally on a smooth, sun-ripened chunk of obsidian. With his last strength, he heaves it at the sallow, acromegalic face behind the glass, and he can hear the glass waterfall as he dashes into unconsciousness.

IN BED

He can't sleep. Writhes and twists in his sweaty sheets. Lyrics—songs sung and songs to come—course through his head. The words repeat endlessly, like the boredom of life. He fights to take his mind off them, tries naming capitals, square roots—but it's no use, it doesn't work. The lyrics repeat inexorably, sing to him tirelessly. He can't go on with this game.

FINALE

Something has gone wrong. Oh yes: Ken's drums are rattling like a train in high gear; Nigel's smooth bent notes sail in electric shock through the big PA speakers and Ian dances, leaps, lands in deep splits: his flashing eyes, his floating hair. All of this, yes. But something has gone wrong.

He is giving the performance of his life. Never has his voice been more perfect, his expression lewder, his gymnastics more spectacular. When he breaks into a mournful blues tune, the audience falls to silence. The band cuts out, on signal, and Ian continues alone, his solo voice rocketing out across the night, multi-echoing through the speakers. The entire audience, four hundred thousand, begins to sob. Like the hum of the sea or the drone of the earth as it twists round its axis. There is a moment of suspended beauty, one note sustained, flying out from the stage to permeate eight hundred thousand ears with its sadness. And then the band comes in full on the final chord that brings the mass to its feet. Nigel's guitar leads right into the next song—a frantic, hard-rock boogie. Ian is possessed: flaying his body, leaping, twisting, shuddering with each pounding beat. The audience crushes against the stage. When Ian's voice comes in, the panic begins. People up front are pinned beneath the hordes from the rear—all four hundred thousand push forward, crazed. The musclemen on stage, the bouncers, are flinging girls back into the frothy sea of faces, one after another. The air is full of them, like airborne cheerleaders. They fall hard on faces, necks, beneath thousands of feet. But Ian goes on screeching out his lyrics, oblivious to the whole thing, urging on Ken and Nigel and Harv, the bass player. The music swells to an incredible thumping volume, like artillery fire.

So many now surround the stage that it is impossible for the bouncers to keep them down. Then the first anonymous hands reach out and pull one of them into the audience. Then another, and another. Unchecked, they leap up on-stage, charge at Ian. He dodges the first few, keeps singing. But the drums and bass, at this volume, are like adrenalin to the maddened crowd. Finally they surround Ian, tear into him—his voice chokes off, the guitars screech, the drums brake. Then, like a man tormented by a swarm of wasps, he leaps blindly off into the crowd, his tattered clothes flapping behind him. Below it's like a gladiatorial pit. In seconds, his clothes are gone, his hair ripped out, the mad press for souvenirs, his fingers torn from the sockets, his body dismembered. Then with a groan, the stage collapses, pitches forward. Amid the screams, a high metallic whine can be heard. No one has disconnected the Amp. □

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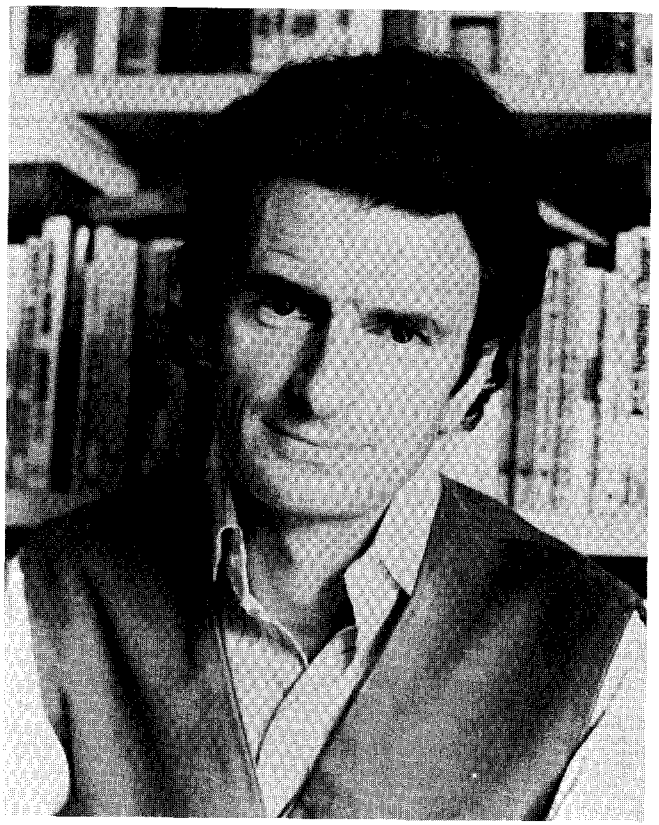

# THE DEVIL TREE: An Interview with Jerzy Kosinski

Born in Poland in 1933, JERZY KOSINSKI is an American novelist who writes exclusively in English. Since his arrival in the United States in 1957, he has published two books on collective behavior, *The Future Is Ours, Comrade* and *No Third Path*, both under the pen name Joseph Novak. His first novel, *The Painted Bird* (1965), was awarded France's *Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger*. For *Steps* (1968) he received the National Book Award. His third novel, *Being There* (1971), was a fable version of Kosinski's continuing meditation on the theme of violence, a "conceit" concerned with the phenomena of masses of men dead from an assailant so far removed as to be entirely invisible.

In the new grammar of violence, *The Devil Tree* (1973) moves the "danger" signs closer to the edge of the well-traveled road. This fourth novel is a recreation of the schizoid ethos of the American dream rapidly disintegrating into the American nightmare. Kosinski's new protagonist, Jonathan Whalen, comes to discover that "the escape route has no exit: for some in America, coming of age is coming apart." In a rare interview, Mr. Kosinski expands upon the idea of what it means to become a personal "event" in a modern society falling into ethical turmoil.

*–D. J. C.*

*Cahill: Your previous novels present an enormously different atmosphere and dramatic situation. Do you see* The Devil Tree *as thematically related to your earlier fiction?*

KOSINSKI: I think there's a greater similarity between *The Painted Bird* and *The Devil Tree*, at least in terms of my attitude, than between, let's say, *The Devil Tree* and *Being There*, or *The Devil Tree* and *Steps*. I think that if I'm to judge somehow, *Steps* and *Being There* were responses to and comments upon a certain very specific character and a very specific situation, while *The Devil Tree* is more of a meditation without an attempt to respond to and to comment upon the fictive reality it creates. In my own attitude toward my novel, I felt a substantial difference throughout the writing of the book; I policed myself not to respond to Whalen, whom I would not like, and not to really comment upon him, since my practicality and my own background would clearly either get rid of certain predicaments of his life or would modify them for him. I had no right to do that. In both *Steps* and *Being There* I was in a position of responding to and commenting upon; they were, so to speak, at my disposal. Here the events and the protagonist were not. I think this is one difference. I also think that *The Devil Tree* is very much like *The Painted Bird*, yet more than *The Painted Bird*. It is the most societal of all the novels because an attempt has been made to condense and to crystallize certain situations which are common to all of us, at least in my view, and known to all of us—unlike the other three novels in which one could claim that they were not necessarily the episodes or experiences of everyday quality. *The Painted Bird* relies on the Second World War, the event which is gone. *Steps* focuses on the events which could be dismissed as indigenous, simply because they could feasibly take place, or could have taken place, in another land. But *The Devil Tree* is a composite and a condensation of something which is over-familiar, as opposed



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to the other novels, which were not. Also, if you take some of the basic components: the plight of the young man, which again typifies countless similar situations among my students at Princeton and Wesleyan and at Yale. The family trust, a very common middle class institution by now in the United States; the history of drug use and abuse, perhaps—the young people going to Europe or to the Middle East or to Africa to use it as a playground for an exposure to drugs which they cannot that easily pursue here. The group therapy proliferating over the nation.

And I think the major issue is the inability of the young to fulfill the trust imposed on them by their parents while living off the financial trust their fathers or mothers established for them. The ambiguity even of the very idea of trust—"I trust you, and yet you will live off that trust, financially, so to speak." So, those are my very random comments I make to myself ordinarily. But I did notice that in the notes written for *The Painted Bird*, and that's—what?—seven years ago, the initial paragraph reads: "The transfer of fragments of objective reality to this 'new dimension' in which the literary work arises has a logic of its own and requires the selection and condensation of a large number of phenomena which the writer believes to best 'document' his imagination." I think this statement is much more true in *The Devil Tree* than *The Painted Bird*, about which I wrote these notes.

*Cahill: This "document" of the imagination is therefore a reflection of a contemporary reality . . . .*

KOSINSKI: Yes. This is a part of reality which I feel is contemporary to all of us in the United States. There'll be a large part of the book, unfortunately, which will require some rather elaborate footnotes in the European editions. The very notion of a trust is really unknown—of this sort of a trust. And then of course the word *trust*—there's a trust in someone and a trust by which you live. But I think the climate of the book is something which is quite prevalent in the large body of the society in which, and perhaps vaguely *for* which *The Devil Tree* was written.

*Cahill:* The Devil Tree *is structurally close to the same frame or tableaux method of* Steps, *but a progression of story is more defined. Are your narrative methods the same in both novels?*

KOSINSKI: I think that . . . this book incorporates the various patterns of all the other ones. The fact that I use a set of incidents,—separated by spaces—may superficially resemble the technique of *Steps*, but the function here is quite different. While in *Steps* it was an obvious break between the incidents, in which the reader, so to speak, could abandon it without any damage to himself personally —other than just escaping from an experience—or to the narrative, since he was promised nothing. The white spaces here simply indicate the space . . . they are Jonathan's—they are not the reader's and they are not the author's. This is the place where the experience first occurs. There's a specific story progression in *The Devil Tree*. We do move from the roots to the branches—and there's a resolution of sorts: Jonathan in Geneva looking back at the origin of all the trip, as it were. If there is a point to the book, maybe that's the point: that somehow we all should find out what is the source of what oppresses us, or what is the source of what gives us joy, and confront it directly. If we want, we would be brought to confront it, either on a stretcher or in another way. I think his going to Geneva may mean feasibly he's coming to terms with the ideological roots of his being. Is he going to accept the ethic which brought him up, the tree which somehow erupted from the soil of West Virginia? Even though the climate was transplanted, it's really from there, it's in Geneva. That may be. There is a cumulative story—we know more and more and more about Jonathan and Karen.

In *Steps* we knew really less and less and less, since the protagonist was purposefully rejecting large chunks of his

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own staircase, so to speak; he was abandoning various aspects, he was reductive. Here I think the story is cumulative. Presumably between the moments of crystallized feeling or crystallized reflection, Jonathan—not the reader, but Jonathan—is vacillating, because this is the life which goes on unnoticed, this is the vacuity of the existence. This is opposite to what it was in *Steps.* I also thought it would be unfair and untrue and ultimately artificial to have the book organized in chapters, since they are not chapters to Jonathan Whalen; they are fragments which foretell an imminent reality perhaps, but they are not chapters in his life. The fact that part of the narrative of *The Devil Tree* is written in the third person and part in the first person doesn't even imply that he survived altogether. These may be the remnants of Jonathan Whalen. The last parts are in the third person; he may be dead by now. I think the writing of the whole narrative in the first person would somehow have implied that he's alive.

*Cahill: Jonathan Whalen lives quite handsomely from a financial trust but he seems to have rejected the values which made this great fund of wealth available to him. But there are many people in many places who are engaged in fulfilling or failing to fulfill the aspirations of those people or generations just ahead of them . . .*

KOSINSKI: Of course. They have to. And this is another predicament of the societal devil tree. How does a child fulfill the trust of the parents if the periods are separated by profound changes in society in which the very notion of the trust is changed? I mean trust morally speaking, even. And in a protestant society particularly, how does a child match the vested energy of the parents who went very often into the empty countryside and populated the countryside with chimneys and skyscrapers and businesses, when the child is already born into this jungle? The very idea that the child is supposed to do better than the parent can be metaphysically and sociologically a tragic idea. It implies somehow a cumulative power which grows with generations, while one could argue that it is the very opposite. Such power diminishes, it gets diluted in a large collective process in which the individual matters less and less and less. Frick, Carnegie, and a few other ones, a few other originators, today would go to college. Their efforts at the age of 19 or 21 or 22 would be diluted in a vast pursuit of intellectual subjects. There would be no time for going to the factory every day.

*Cahill: In almost all of your novels you've appended certain aphoristic statements, too. Do you find a special need for those aphorisms in the book? For instance, the epigraph for* Steps *from* The Bhagavadgita.

KOSINSKI: The epigraph gives a miniature argument. But to me the whole principle of fiction is that of a reality condensed and crystallized, not only by having selected certain incidents, but by the very principle of language which does not in itself reproduce anything but the inking on paper. The language in its making is "aphoristic," so to speak. The word written in itself means very little. It is the implication, the decoding process, which takes place in our mind which makes the principle of literature and the principle of language meaningful. Hence a novel is nothing but slightly larger—spatially, a larger aphorism. It is what we make of it. What about the Ten Commandments? What are they? What about the Bible, both the New and the Old Testaments? What about the Koran? What about the Talmud? I think the whole principle of the language is aphoristic, and therefore it would be only appropriate for me, I thought, in the beginning of the book, to indicate that this is not a computer, 1001, model 40 which can retrieve any aspect of objective reality—tell you the size of the streets, the number of vehicles, the registration numbers —it cannot. It can do only what a small aphorism in the beginning, perhaps, could do as well, that's all.

*Cahill: I would like to ask you, as you view your own work now in the novel as a form, do you have a sense of a strong deliberation, or a line of progression, that you're trying to pursue in the novel?*

KOSINSKI: In which terms? In terms of the control of the language, in terms of proposing a certain social philosophy . . .?

*Cahill: Yes, that would be the kind of thing I have in mind.*

KOSINSKI: I think in terms of proposing a certain way of evoking . . . You must remember that from the very beginning I insist for myself, or to myself, on one major aspect, that a novel is nothing without its reader. In other words, had I to write a novel knowing that it would never be read, I wouldn't have written it. Now this may sound as a sort of highly egocentric statement, as it probably is. It presupposes the act of reading in the act of writing. It assumes that the act of writing has to lead, must lead, to the act of reading. And when I used the word *decoding,* what I meant is that my encoding is of no use, since in itself the work of fiction has no meaning. It acquires meaning only in the process of being decoded by another psyche. Not by the psyche I can approximate but by the psyche I *cannot* approximate. How do I know anything about you? Is there any way to know anything about you?

**"There is no place beyond words where experience first occurs."**



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There isn't. There is a solipsistic quality to it—that it has to be decoded. If there's an element of having benefited by my previous works, I do not feel that I have learned anything, I do not feel that I am at a different stage than I was when I was writing the first one, since the guiding principle is basically the same: language aimed at the psyche I do not know. I have no way of knowing how it will be decoded. All I can assume is that there isn't much of a difference between my psyche and the collective psyche which surrounds me, and therefore quite likely what I encode, the other will be able to decode within a vaguely similar frame of reference. And the *frame of reference* is a crucial phrase. Frame of reference meaning the societal components which are rather readily accessible. The fact that I make such a judgment, "readily accessible," means both that I consider myself egocentric enough to make such a judgment but at the same time totally collective in my outlook, assuming that others will be able to perceive them as common events.

*Cahill: I was thinking of a sense of beliefs that may be developing and unfolding in your work.*

KOSINSKI: No other sense of belief than the sense of belief that there is a possibility that the other, collectively speaking, the reader, will be able to decode it and that he might, through the very act of decoding, feasibly bring some order into the otherwise unstated reality, psychic and collective. The act of reading can therefore make him, just as it made me in the act of writing, more idiosyncratic and more aware. It does not mean to make him better or worse, more or less moral, human or less human. In other words, if there is an optimum I would aim at, it is exactly what I aim at in myself. The act of writing makes me by its very nature more aware of my own relationship to my own self, to my own environment. Ideally this should also happen to the reader. If awareness is the purpose—*what* awareness? This is something beyond even my speculation.

*Cahill: And you're offering no directives for that channelizing . . .*

KOSINSKI: The directions are implicit. The directions are implicit in the fact that from my point of view, and I do believe it, a man more aware of himself is less of an animal. A lion or a mouse are not aware of who they are. A man who is more aware of himself and of his environment is by the very nature of the awareness more human. The more human he is, the better for all of us. The more human I am, the better for me. The more I understand myself, I think, the more at peace I am with myself, with my ultimate plight, the unfortunate death which somehow no author can escape, nor for that matter a reader. And I think this is the ultimate belief, that the act of awareness, the act of experiencing oneself in a process in which one can state certain things about oneself and one's connection with reality is a profoundly human process. I remarked somewhere in the past that the animals react even to music but they do not react to the printed word. The principle of literature is a sublimely human principle. It activates the brain, and of course it utilizes the brain, and only the brain. And because of this, of course there is this moral; this partly answers your question: there is definitely an implicit moral statement.

*Cahill: I want to pick that up if I may, go to Whalen for a moment and then perhaps back to Karen by way of a slightly different idea, too. Early in the novel Whalen sees many people, and they appear to him as distant, as alien, and he dismisses them, and in the next sentence the novel reads, "He was his own event."*

KOSINSKI: Yes.

*Cahill: Which seems to suggest his egoism, the way he's locked into himself. Whalen characterizes himself as a vagrant, an outcast, and he recognizes the duality of his personality. He says that his very real self is violently antisocial. There are two important motives that seem to operate in his character: one is to confront his own contradictions, and the other is to admit the impact of his childhood. Again the issue of the past is sounded—he is born under the sign of Saturn, which gives him the feelings of separation and estrangement.*

KOSINSKI: And he mobilizes whatever he can, however mythical, to reinforce whatever he thinks is to be reinforced; I mean, he mobilizes astrology on one hand and the background of his father on another. That is the ambiguity.

*Cahill: The point I was thinking of, and relating backwards to Karen—that there's a great play made in the book of manipulating people, for example the early scene with Barbara in Rangoon, and how Whalen manipulates Barbara by leading her to believe that he has murdered Mrs. Llewellen. I was interested in the way in which everyone is manipulating everyone. Karen is manipulating Whalen; Whalen is surely manipulating Barbara—this seems to be one of Whalen's games. Is this manipulation of people one of the special targets of the book?*

KOSINSKI: I can only speculate, but in the absence of meaningful definitions of the self and in the absence of meaningful relationships, what surfaces is the most elemen-

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tary aspect—that is, not who I am, and not who the others are, but who I am in relation to others. In other words, to what degree I can push them around, or to what degree they can push me around. So, I think, because of the absence of knowing exactly who he is, because of the inability to know who the others are, because of being incapable of creating a lasting and meaningful relationship of any kind, either with his own past even, or with his future, so to speak, which dwells in him . . . what remains again is the most elementary sort of game playing. And what is the encounter group? Isn't the encounter group the ultimate game playing? It is of interest that we finally object, and your voicing the problem is a reflection of it, that we feel that manipulating Barbara in Rangoon is manipulating, but playing one's line in front of a psychoanalyst, or playing one's past in front of an encounter group, somehow is not.

*Cahill: But the point I was thinking of here is again the problem of defining self, and Jonathan speaks of the aspects of his personality that are very deep within; there are special references to "the struggle within me" and the talk of this kind of dualism, "They did not understand that I was pushing myself to extremes in order to discover my many selves." And I think of the multiple experiences of Whalen here, and notably his ambiguous relationships with Karen.*

KOSINSKI: I think one ought to define oneself in terms of the language which one uses. The passage which you mention, when Whalen says "There's a place beyond words where experience first occurs to which I always want to return," is important. The point now is, *is there such a place*? By its essential nature, language pronounces judgments. There is no place beyond words where experience first occurs. This is, of course, wishful thinking. Jonathan here wants to return to a non-existent place, to the place beyond judgment. He says, "I suspect that whenever I articulate my thoughts or translate my impulses into words, I am betraying the real thoughts and impulses which remain hidden." To me this is the source of what I consider to be the modern—Protestant, perhaps—suspicion of the language altogether. There is a feeling of not trusting the language. And I think it is implicit in the acts of many people who feel somehow that the language, because it has the power to confine meanings, reduces and cripples us. Whalen also says, "Instead of expressing myself, I produce a neatly ordered document about someone else's state of mind." This may be the source of some of his predicament. You may recall that in *Steps* I was also concerned with the role of the language. The protagonist of *Steps* at one time feels that he could free himself by abandoning language, that the state of muteness is something which is superior to the state of being talked about or of talking oneself. There is also a passage in *Being There* about the very suppression of articulating one's thoughts as an ultimate goal to which we may willingly or unwillingly be moving. And then, of course, the boy in *The Painted Bird* becomes mute. I think that modern society is a derivative of the Protestant ethos, the most universal of ethical forces in terms of the history of culture. It is the most universal ethos, since it not only incorporates all the other ones, but leaves them permanently present by not supressing, by not counteracting them ideologically. Max Weber knew what he was pointing out: the element of "calling" is extremely important to create the skyscrapers which you can see from this window, and everything we have talked about. Within the Protestant ethos, because of the constant stress on action and on societal aspects, the element of individual expression is always questionable. To what degree is an individual experience a valid experience? Hence our constant stress on autobiography, our attempt to dismiss the imagination and to ground the experience as narrated, as having actually taken place in a specific environment, to ground it in an acceptable mode of events. Therefore, Whalen's conflict begins when he begins to see himself as an event. His father would never say that; his father would say "I consider an event what affects thousands of people. When it affects me it is of no importance; therefore, my own son is not an event to me. The events are the children of my workers, of people who are not even *my* workers." He would say "the company's employees." This is the tragedy of Jonathan, that he's born into the society which in some way is promiscuous enough within its Protestant tolerance to allow him to consider himself an event, without any mercy given to the pursuit of one's self as a meaningful event. The final sentence, "I regret having made myself so accessible," is part of his tragedy of self-perception, since he cannot accept the self words reveal. He abandons language because he is no longer an event.

*Cahill: I'm interested in what you say about this muteness, this preverbal state that seems to carry with it some aura of mystery, some aura of superiority—that people define themselves, but refuse to place that definition into verbal forms. There is a wonderful phrase by T. S. Eliot in which he says, "If you haven't got the word, you haven't got the idea." One does not have a grasp of a concept until he can give it shape in words. In the last sentence that you read in regard to Whalen, "I regret having made myself so accessible," he is putting himself into words and now would rather retract because that admission is a show of his banal naiveté . . .*

KOSINSKI: Jonathan realizes that he must make himself

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as accessible as possible; this is the only way to a meaningful contact with oneself and with the others. By not making himself accessible he withdraws to the place where the experience first occurs, which means to a place from which he cannot communicate with anyone. This is the ultimate tragedy of Whalens, that they refuse to make themselves accessible through imagination, that they perceive themselves neither as an event nor as a collective entity, that they are in that awful limbo in which one is willing to talk about one's background to a psychoanalyst, but one cannot really accept oneself fully, for whatever reasons one exists. In other words, is it a hedonistic pursuit or is it a meaningful pursuit of business? Because of his ambiguous relationship to the language, which is the only way to make himself accessible to himself as well, he is pronouncing a verdict, a tragic verdict, upon himself. And so is Karen; she's no better in that respect.

*Cahill: But your own idea of the tragic verdict—I suppose it's even wrong to say they pronounce it on themselves; they simply don't allow it ever to come to the fore, and they refuse to formalize a whole hazy body of feelings that are underneath, because to formalize them is to define them and be the thing they say.*

KOSINSKI: Yes. Exactly. So the mistrust of the language here becomes the boomerang, and of course that's what happens, that unless you can dissolve yourself in a pursuit as grand as that of Horace Sumner Whalen—in which the corporation becomes the language, the corporate venture takes care of the expression—unless you can do that, what is left to you?

*Cahill: Silence.*

KOSINSKI: Macaulay, the corporate man in the new conglomerate which old Whalen left behind, hides behind his desk, and the desk speaks 50 different languages—visual language, video language, and so forth. He is in no way concerned with what he himself is; he is really what his action is. He claims that his images can be transferred straight across the corridor or across the ocean. He is very much like Whalen's father, beyond the self. But Whalen is not. What you said in the beginning of our conversation, that many young people are in the position today of Henry James' characters, is very telling—they really are. They could pursue a meaningful search of who they are precisely because others, senior Whalens, Macaulays, take care of them but many refuse to engage in the pursuit of who they are, because they are offspring of a very tragic tree in which the imagination has never been allowed to emerge as a meaningful way of communicating. The only avenue left to the definition of the self, and the only avenue left to self expression has been really blocked.

*Cahill: Yes. Their engagement in multiple and erratic experiences, always entering down dark corridors . . .*

KOSINSKI: Eventually, and listening to music, which is not verbal, watching images which are not directly communicative. I think part of the preoccupation of the very young ones with the rock groups is linked to the feeling created that these popular stars manage to define themselves through their medium, through the intensity of music, and therefore they became freak-like, free, and ungrounded. And all the kids who watch them, of course, are very much like Whalen, they are very much grounded, but they are grounded in the environment which they refuse to accept as meaningful. Jonathan says somewhere in the book that he envied the great leaders because there was never any mention of their fathers. Of course, younger Whalens, Whalens who are 14, 15, look at the rock stars with exactly the same feeling. They are liberated from the family ethos, producing their own sound, which is a non-language.

*Cahill: And the music is therefore, I suppose, the extension of their essence.*

KOSINSKI: Yes. Exactly.

*Cahill: Do you feel that Whalen is the complete exemplar of the failure of values?*

KOSINSKI: That is not a judgment I would make, you must remember. That is the judgment you have to make as a reader. I don't know what it evokes in you. To me Whalen is no more, no less, than a man, so frankly lost, like the majority of us, between his roots and his branches. The particular predicament of Whalen is that he is confronted with a highly perplexing and complex reality, which by now, particularly in the United States, has managed to mix the technological with the psychic, managed to submerge the encounter group in the computer print-out. It is no surprise that so many places now mate people by computer, an unthinkable arrangement to a generation of 25 years ago where even a dance floor was not sufficient grounds for knowing someone. One had to "go out" several times. Various "dates" had to somehow precede even a superficial knowing of each other. Now it is the computer. I think what is fascinating in contemporary America is this very mixture of artifacts which are of physical and of metaphysical nature all in one, including the family situation. Within our technological and legalistic

**"The very idea that the child is supposed to do better than the parent can be metaphysically and sociologically a tragic idea."**



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society, there is a strange ambiguity in which ethical and moral values can be completely dismissed.

*Cahill: As I think of your recent essay, "The Lone Wolf," I also think of this image as representing a concept, a certain mode of encountering life. The image of the lone wolf is woven throughout all of your work. It seems to have an immediate relationship to the image of the painted bird, the individual standing alone, removed from the crowd by conscious choice. In* The Devil Tree *the following statement appears: "To say yes is to follow the mass, to do what is commonly expected. To say no is to deny the crowd, to be set apart, to reaffirm yourself." It seems that between the concept of* The Painted Bird, *or the image of the painted bird, and "The Lone Wolf," there is a significant relationship.*

KOSINSKI: We die alone. The pack doesn't die with us. The statement which you just read is a mere indication that, no matter how strong the collectivity, it will allow us to die alone. This is the truth which Whalen could have achieved, and he could have developed a sense of serenity almost; he could certainly come to terms with both himself as a branch and himself as a root. But he abandons it altogether from the mid-story on. The motive of the lone wolf is the motive of all the novels, with the one exception of Chauncey Gardiner who is really unable to even realize that there is such a possibility. He's externalized beyond the collectivity, indeed. Beyond the garden, but also beyond the collectivity.

*Cahill: Yet to the pack he seems like an ideal leader.*

KOSINSKI: Of course. But it's because the pack lost the very sense of its individual components as well. —The *Painted Bird*, *Steps*, and *The Devil Tree* share this ultimate quest for identity. Jonathan Whalen is the spiritual descendant of the other protagonists. But ultimately I think we all are.

*Cahill: Is Whalen lost in the end? Is he lost to any kind of meaningful engagement of life with others?*

KOSINSKI: I think no more than the rest of us. How can he combine the sense of heritage with a society which is changing so rapidly from year to year that it discredits any sense of history? Both the notion of heritage and imminent history are lost. How can he possibly find a meaningful life, a search he is forced to abandon altogether, the way many of us are forced to abandon the central effort of purpose? What is the need for the encounter group, if not the search for a meaningful other? How, in the crowds of people who work with us, who walk the streets and take the subways with us, how do we find a meaningful relationship? We are now at the stage of finding the meaningful moment. How does one explain the prevalent depression in our society? How do we explain the fact of the industrial society caught in psychic turmoil by a drug problem unprecedented in history? Jonathan Whalen functions in a highly schizoid environment, an increasing pressure we all feel. Life loses meaning. It neither terrifies us nor pleases us. We are in a strange limbo of growing indifference not because of idealogical reasons—because simply it would take too much energy to understand the chaos of our times. And that is the schizoid ethos.

*Cahill: I want to go back for a moment to some of the things you were saying in regard to psychiatric deformities. The themes of insanity and incipient madness play a prominent role in* The Devil Tree. *What we do to those people who are deformities of the standard or norm is to lock them up in order that the rest of us can lead our lives without the visible presence of those who cannot be mentally and physically absorbed into the contemporary moment. Jonathan Whalen comments at one point in the novel that no corporation will hire a hunchback. We tend to eliminate differences that we cannot understand.*

KOSINSKI: Yes, but we also do it to ourselves as well. The fact that we reject so many aspects of our lives which could make them more meaningful is an illustration that part of us is chained in the attic. And we will never let it out. This is what I meant by the ultimate tragedy—what we do to others we really do to ourselves. The fact that the national insurance would not make provision for the mentally ill is of course the most damaging aspect, not to the mentally ill, but to any of us who are going to require that sort of help. So there is a strange blindness, a refusal to recognize tragic aspects of life. In *The Devil Tree*, there is an ironic reference to Samuel Tewk, an English reformer, who in 1813-1814 created the first asylum for the mentally ill based on a different principle. Until the first decade of the nineteenth century, the guiding principle was that lunacy could be cured through punishment; it was not the mentally ill who were being punished but the evil forces within them. And therefore when they were chained to the walls and beaten, they would eventually emerge cured. But what we need to do, Tewk believed, is to make the afflicted people function socially in an acceptable way so that they will not upset those who are not mentally ill. And therefore he was hailed as a very humane philosopher, since he did away with the cruelty. Now the mentally afflicted were to be trained how to behave at tea parties; and they were taken to church, and then dressed the way

**"A man who is more aware of himself and of his environment is, by the very nature of the awareness, more human."**



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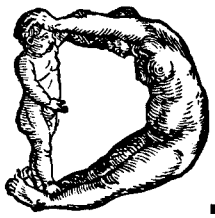

everyone else was dressed, so no one would recognize them as being mentally ill. Of course the pain they suffered, and the anguish of the mentally ill remained their private property, so to speak. We, presumably the healthy ones, were not supposed to be disturbed by the presence of those whose universe was so different from ours. Of course I don't think there is a school which could possibly be named after Samuel Tewk, even though he's, again, highly regarded. But I think all our schools and universities ought to be.

I think many of our educational institutions reflect some of the symptoms that we have talked about, especially in their isolation of the young from the genuine difficulties and responsibilities encountered in the larger social experience. During the educational process, the child or adolescent remains cut off from the society outside, the very society on which his life will depend. The young person is growing into society, yet he is kept really outside of the society into which he is growing. So, metaphorically, his roots are kept away from his branches. The sooner his roots become the branches, the better for the tree. He is kept within a peculiar dimension in which his roots are not really brought into practice. The schools are not emphasizing tradition, history, heritage or family origins. As if they are not important and may be safely discarded. At the same time schools are not moving into another dimension of values. So there's a strange and a very curious way in which young people are emotionally retarded. They may be intellectually trained, but they are ill equipped emotionally to confront the turbulence of modern society. They are removed from the source of emotional turmoil which is functioning within the industrial society, and functioning among others who are lone wolves. During the college and university years, the feeling is somehow created that the dining room typifies sort of a United Nations of human nature. We all sit at one table here and there are no differences, and we are all united by the same pursuit. But what happens to us outside is ultimately tragic. To me, this is one of the reasons why so many young people turned to drugs, to reinforce themselves, to create some sort of stimulus from within in order to make up for their inability to function from without. They felt that they were not equipped emotionally, and therefore they needed an injection of strength; and some of them took to drugs to provide this misleadingly reinforcing element.

*Cahill: Which can only indicate a refusal or a complete failure to engage with complex issues.*

KOSINSKI: Or what's far more important to me, to confront one's own self. And therefore they would be left at the mercy, not only of the unknown society, of the society unknown to them, which would traumatize them all the time, but they would also be faced with something far more unknown, their very ownselves.

*Cahill: Which is the obliteration of history, of course, too.*

KOSINSKI: In purely practical, individual terms, they would be left with the unacceptable self, and that is a heavy burden to live with and to die with.

*Cahill: In the epigraph from Marcel Proust's* Remembrance of Things Past, *you give an oblique reference to history, notably the history of an individual. There's the phrase, "our future dwells within us." Whalen is a man in a time and in a place, a wealthy American who rejects the history imposed on him—that is, the life of responsible action in the whole corporate web of social reality. What was the future dwelling within Whalen that foreshadows the adult Whalen we see in the book? Is his plight a situation in which there is an internal future destroyed before it can be realized?*

KOSINSKI: He begins with emptiness. He will have to. This is something which he has no choice but to begin with. He cannot possibly embrace his roots as the context of his psyche. One cannot embrace heavy industry as the spiritual origin of one's development. I think this is true of all Whalens everywhere. In other words, one's father should never be a source of one's own development, because then one discards history; one assumes that the father and son have a lot in common, and they have probably less in common than anyone else. They are two different people growing up in two different climates. The very fact that this is the son of a father means that some awful, terrible change has taken place outside—one is old, one is young. What therefore I think Whalen could pursue would be a pursuit of the new self which could make use of history, but very often by a conscious discarding of it. I think this could lead to a true progress in which a new sort of awareness would be developed, one which would allow Whalen and his contemporaries to come to terms with who they are. Indeed, the attempt would be made at a self-definition. If there is a value to having a well defined father, collectively defined, financially defined, politically defined, it is that it could force the child to seek a new definition. This is the future which theoretically dwells in Whalen, the search for a new self. If he is to abandon it, and I think he does abandon it, then of course he reverts into a father in miniature, which means he becomes Horace Whalen 50 years later, and that is of course an anachronistic animal which is going to be destroyed by the jungle. But the jungle makes no provision for the species which don't



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exist anymore. A dinosaur would die in today's jungle; the jungle is not high enough to hide him. And this is I think the ultimate tragedy, that young Whalens are condemned to extinction. Their attempt to kill Howmets is a desperate attempt to kill those who know about their roots. But of course it is doomed to failure. The society outside will always be composed of many generations superimposed on each other. It's a child-like attempt to remove the roots, so to speak, because he has nothing else. So the drive becomes ultimately destructive. With the drugs, the drive was to suppress the psyche. With the murder towards the end of the book the drive is to suppress the collectivity. Both are doomed to failure. Whose failure? Whalen's failure. And so this is, I think, the imminent reality which is foretold, at least for me.

*Cahill: I associate this kind of emphasis on a controlling past with the title of the novel, and I think the immediate past out of which Whalen emerges seems one that's invested with a kind of moral stupor. Is Whalen then one of the young ones being destroyed by the devil?*

KOSINSKI: If the devil is the contemporary society, then yes. Because the tree will grow, and only the big ones will survive, and there will be a shortage of young ones. But ultimately it is the tree itself which is punished. It is the society on which a terrible punishment is being inflicted, because the society needs—we all do—we need Whalens. And of course we need more Baobabs. If the society is going to destroy the young ones, and only the full-grown Baobabs will be left, then we are in trouble, because then we, very much like Whalen, are at the mercy of forces which are not of "today." Then we would be strangled by the roots of the past which have nothing to do with our branching out into the contemporary society. We may therefore have to put up with the reactionary philosophy, we may have to put up with reactionary legislation, we may have to put up with the politicians who will be reflecting the ethos of 50 years ago, rather than the requirements of the contemporary life, and eventually we may end up in a madhouse in which no one will make provisions for the mentally ill.

*Cahill: Is Whalen being obliterated from the landscape . . .*

KOSINSKI: Yes. As a species, of course.

*Cahill: . . . and there is the continuance of the old trees, but they're not food for the present times.*

KOSINSKI: The parents of our students are not falling apart; the young ones are. Of course in the past it was the opposite. The old ones were out of touch with society. The general complaint of the 19th Century parents was that Julien Sorels were born, Fabrizio Del Dangos, Rastignacs—they were the ones who were taking over. And of course the parents were then pushed back to their futile or semi-futile retirements and totally out of touch. But now it's the opposite. This is what I meant—a madhouse in which no provision is made for mental illness. The old Baobabs, somehow, remain in power because the young don't vote.

*Cahill: Which is one of the great ironies of our time, because the forces of change seem to come from the young people, but they're doomed to failure. They're doomed to failure because of sheer practical and political inaction.*

KOSINSKI: Like Whalen, somewhere in the middle of their development they say, "I am a son of . . ." And at the police station the ultimate test of who are you, your identity, that's where they give up. And they say "I am a son of . . ." Well, from then on we don't deal with the son anymore, we have to deal with the father—alive or dead, metaphorically present or spiritually present, if you prefer, or present as a corporate body—and that's what happens.

*Cahill: Many critics have noted a persistent strain of violence which informs your fiction. Do you find the same landscape of violence in* The Devil Tree?

KOSINSKI: Yes. Far deeper, I think, and more penetrating, since unlike the violence of *The Painted Bird*, external to a large degree, unlike the violence of *Steps*, brushed off by the protagonist who is capable of protecting himself. The violence of *The Devil Tree* is far closer to the violence of *Being There*. I think of all the four novels *Being There* is the most violent book, since there the whole notion of violence has been already discarded, but the protagonist is an ultimate victim of the ultimate violence, and therefore the violence is not something which he can define as violence. Hence he cannot defend himself against it; he is really the ultimate result of it, the ultimate victim really. I like to believe that *The Devil Tree* incorporates all the other novels in a sort of dialectic fashion, Hegelian fashion; but then perhaps because of also denying the other three, it creates a new entity and therefore, for me at least, it's far more difficult to deal with. My ambiguity towards *The Devil Tree* is far greater than towards any other of my works because I think the work is far larger than I am. I sympathize and empathize with the boy in *The Painted Bird;* I understand very well the man in *Steps;* I have pity and no connection, really, with Chauncey Gardiner; he doesn't concern me—he's too predictable for me, and too



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**"Many young people are offspring of a very tragic tree in which the imagination has never been allowed to emerge."**

obvious. However, I'm very ambiguous towards Jonathan Whalen. On one hand I understand him and some of me is in him, but on the other hand I find him naive and I find him also rudimentary in terms of life; he is someone I can analyze rather easily. Yet he has many components which I know nothing about. What do I know about growing up with roots which are not severed? What does any Central European know about growing in a progressive, cumulative fashion? All of us had our childhood chopped by various events, and the childhood of our times was chopped as well by wars, by revolutions, by sudden uprooting. And so in many ways I feel that *The Devil Tree*, in terms of my old relation to my work, did something which puzzled me; I'm far more perplexed by *The Devil Tree* and by Jonathan and his environment, than by anything I have ever done in the past.

*Cahill: If the violence is revealed in its most acute and painful forms, there are elements or scenes of sexual violence—ones far outside of that popular realm of affronted sexual mores. Generally, these are situations in which people abuse each other for devious self-serving ends.*

KOSINSKI: That's right, the sexual violence is accepted by them, and therefore they may not necessarily classify something they would consider done to them. This is the way things are, they say. That's what I meant by being penetrated by the violence which loses the definition almost. So I think this is a different violence, since to the protagonist of this violence it becomes a way of life in which they don't feel that it could be otherwise. Indeed, they don't think it *should* be otherwise. What's more, I think the basic difference between the violence of *The Devil Tree* and all the other books, except of *Being There*, is that the violence is insidious, and it comes camouflaged as something else. We all know that some of the protagonists of *The Devil Tree* would say that there are certain business requirements; if you want to play the big game you have to play with the small tricks. If you want to live in a fun city, this is the price you pay for fun. There is a sort of jungle philosophy in which the protagonists don't call the shots by their proper names. Language again becomes a traveler's check, really; it is plastic money in the form of a credit card. I think a traveler's check may be a good code for this book. In other words, it is not the real thing anymore; it has the various curtains. Language performs the camouflage function, the veiling of the events. What's more, all of these protagonists, unlike Chance in *Being There*, who is imprisoned in his garden, and perhaps is retarded and therefore cannot get out of it, these people in *The Devil Tree* have all the options—you said it yourself, they have almost the Jamesian option of getting out of their own predicament, providing they know what their predicament is. They don't know it anymore, but they refuse to realize this. Why is Jonathan coming back from Africa to New York? What for? Is the meaningful search for the self to be conducted only in the fun city? Couldn't it possibly be conducted in another culture? So, we are back to the same aspect of the self from which they all, I think, progressively depart, further and further, until society becomes the "great" encounter group; the self becomes a conversation with a psychiatrist. I think the individual lends himself as a victim by an open inability to counteract even the most elementary pressures. Part of this is, of course, the inability of the men and women to see themselves as victims. This is, I think, the tragic predicament . . . this is the ultimate defeat of the imagination, and the defeat of the language. A man as a protagonist of his own life, ceases to see his own life as eventful enough to be tragic.

*Cahill: A number of the people in the novel seem to be infected with a diseased will, a complete suspension of power to know and power to act. Does this seem a fair statement to you?*

KOSINSKI: Yes. Actually *The Devil Tree* may be in some remote way an attempt to state it. How does it happen? What are the ingredients of this paralysis—are they individual? Or are they perhaps derivative of the situation which is nonhistorical, precisely because it is not historical? What are the collectives between the generations of fathers and the generations of sons and daughters? Are there any? Is there any heritage—meaningful heritage—left to us, and if so, what is it, other than the meaningless trust administered by people whose contact has been neither with the roots nor with the branches?

*Cahill: Does the novel offer any kind of relief or repair or restoration from the unholy state of disease?*

KOSINSKI: I think the novel does it, any novel does, in the process of being read—this is what we said in the beginning, that the act of connecting the imagination of the reader with the imagination implicit in the language is already an attempt at the self, in this case the self which is reading. Hence any act of reading—indeed the act of reading anything—is an act of activating the projecting ability of the self. From this point of view, if one insists on a moral judgment, and very often one does, I think perceiving any art, the very act of perception is already humanizing, since it activates the profoundly human ability to project oneself into another situation. If I were to define the goal of the literary experience, this would be the



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The native calls the baobab "the devil tree" because he claims that the devil, getting tangled in its branches, punished the tree by reversing it. To the native, the roots are branches now, and the branches are roots. To ensure that there would be no more baobabs, the devil destroyed all the young ones. That's why, the native says, there are only full-grown baobab trees left.

— Jerzy Kosinski, *The Devil Tree*

ultimate goal—to make the man more aware of who he is, and of how eventful he is, since he is event to himself. He ought to be. Otherwise what is he? Is he a number in the telephone book? Is he a social security number? All the jokes which we make about a man being nothing but computerized phenomena ironically may be true, unless the man is an event which begins and ends, and which has to be accepted with full recognition of its eventfulness. Unless this takes place, the man then is not only a victim, he can also be an oppressor; he can be used one way or another. He becomes an agent of forces he doesn't know, he doesn't understand. Even violence inflicted on him, in which he's a subject, a very definite subject of cruelty, passes unnoticed. He's lost the ability to perceive himself, and this is ultimately a threatened and threatening individual—an individual who doesn't know who he is. He's pitiful because the life beautifully vested in him is a loss, but he also is, I think, dangerous to other men, since indeed he becomes an agent of other forces.

*Cahill: How should one in the turbulent times of today begin to seek out viable, meaningful, self-definitions when seemingly trapped now in a moral morass?*

KOSINSKI: I could almost say that it's much easier for someone who's trapped to define himself than for someone who has a feeling of relative freedom. Hence I think that if there ever was a time in which the act of self definition was needed, if it's precisely what you have said, it is now, because of the sense of entrapment—at least we should know . . . we may not know who traps us . . . but we should know who is trapped. So the *trapee* . . .

*Cahill: You may have invented a new word.*

KOSINSKI: . . . the immediate *trapee* should know who he is if he lacks the ability to find out who trapped him. And I think this is understandable; I think it's very difficult to find out by whom one is really trapped, in a world as complex as this. However, the means to find out who is trapped are still open to us, I think more than ever before. Before, outside of our taped reality, you and I talked of the sudden emergence of pornography and the sudden, what I call the masturbatory culture, which really aims at the solitary man, the solitary social animal prevented from establishing meaningful sexual, or any other contacts with other people of the same kind. I think the symptoms are clear; we can see that there are more and more people who have been abandoned to their own fate, somehow, who are unable to "cope," as they call it, with the external social reality; they are also quite unable to express in any meaningful way, in any functional way, some of the most basic elements of, or aspects of, their nature: they cannot function sexually, they cannot function emotionally. So we don't like the indications that we are trapped, that man becomes more and more imprisoned, so to speak. Ironically at the same time there seems to be greater urgency than ever to escape—from the situation of entrapment into some sort of vicarious experience.

*Cahill: Isn't this explosion of pornography functional in that it allows people to escape, too; that it makes for them a world in which they can see themselves as the aggressor, the conqueror, through all kinds of fantasies . . .*

KOSINSKI: Or, openly admit that they are victims. But the spectrum is so crude, the actions of anonymous bodies so elementary, that one can only speculate and perhaps regret that with all the options left to the trapee, from all the available means of escaping imaginarily, he would select the crudest, the most elementary form. And that is of course very bad. It's a sad comment on the final inability to perceive one's self as trapped.

*Cahill: One final question about Jonathan at Geneva. The closing scene reads: "The smell of moss spread through the air. He sniffed the dew, listening to the lapping of the water against the stones and felt the skin on the back of his neck prickle. The fog began to lift. He stared across the lake and saw the lights blinking of the villas and hotels of Geneva." Is Jonathan here caught in "the drift towards death," or is the phrase "The fog began to lift" an affirmation of new life?*

KOSINSKI: I think I leave it to interpretation. Can we take it for what it is? He's in Geneva, probably in a clinic; he may have gone through a nervous breakdown as a result of breaking all the relationships, and of course the murder, and trying to get rid of his roots, and unable to keep up with the branches. And it may be that from now on he will live a life of an expatriate, a playboy perhaps, outside of the blinking lights of Geneva, outside of the ethos which brought him up. But it may be also coming back somehow to some ultimate truth, since he wakes up; the weight has lifted itself from his chest. And if that's the case, then maybe he would be able to perceive Geneva for what it is, merely another didactic symbol from which one should grow out and seek an appropriate perspective—across the lake, blinking lights, that's all. It doesn't have to be any specific interpretation; it's a story for what it is. If one wants to dismiss it, one can just say, "Well, there's Jonathan back in Geneva, if he had ever been there, or in Geneva recovering from his cure; he may now be back in New York and starting the whole thing again." □



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# PIECES OF PEACE

*James S. Kunen (b. 9/23/48), like several thousand other young men became eligible for conscription into the United States Army in June, 1970, when he graduated from Columbia University. The previous year he had written a best-selling book on the Columbia disruptions,* The Strawberry Statement; *as he faced the draft himself, and also while covering the Vietnam War at home and abroad as a journalist, he completed* Standard Operating Procedures: Notes of a Draft-Age American.

September 23, 1971
Local Board No. 18
Selective Service System
Framingham, Massachusetts
Dear Sirs:

I am writing in support of Mr. James Simon Kunen's appeal for conscientious objector status. My qualifications are not that I know Mr. Kunen personally, although I do; my chief justification for writing this letter is that, as a teacher and academic critic, I am closely aware of his feelings and beliefs. If there is any justification for training critics and then paying them to teach and research literature, it is that by so doing they can help find insights into the life of man. The act of writing is, along with music and art, one of man's most sophisticated means of expressing personal truth. With some professional vanity, I consider literary criticism to be a superior means of understanding some of the things which happen in human experience; as D. H. Lawrence noted when reviewing our national literature, "An artist is usually a damned liar, but his art, if it be art, will tell you the truth of his day. And that is all that matters."

Mr. Kunen's books, *The Strawberry Statement* (Random House, 1969) and *Standard Operating Procedure* (Avon, 1971), are written in an ideal form for the type of analysis I propose. It is a new genre: the non-fiction novel, or "personal journalism," in which the author offers as the substance of imaginative literature his own experiences and reactions. Kunen's works relate topically to the Vietnam war: first with campus-based resistance at home, and then with its criminal conduct abroad. But it is from his artistic use of form that I hope to generalize. Jim Kunen was not the first student to write about collegiate radicalism, and he himself has counted his war-crimes book as the thirty-fourth on the subject. Yet *The Strawberry Statement*, which otherwise has so much in common with Dotson Rader's *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore* (McKay, 1969), Mark Gerzon's *The Whole World Is Watching* (Viking, 1969), and Richard Zorza's *The Right To Say We* (Praeger, 1970), stands alone as an artistic success, not simply a piece of accurate reportage; and *Standard Operating Procedure* seems the one book out of three dozen which takes the plethora of transcripts, reports, and data, and makes of them personal sense.

James Simon Kunen is sincere in his application for conscientious objector status, and I think his sincerity can be proved from (and is responsible for) the literary merit of his books. Placing oneself at the imaginative center of experience is, by simple definition, more than the facile adoption of a topic. Dotson Rader, for example, draws on the same subjects of war resistance and campus disruption for his own work, but unlike Kunen he cannot find a form to accommodate their lyrical potency. He starts with awesome allusions to the genesis of SDS, and makes extensive references to the more strident passages of the Port Huron Statement. From this beginning he searches for a conclusive middle and end, but at war with his rational impulse are the idealistic notions of the movement he is trying to describe. Although he recognizes the conflict between his methods and their subject, he cannot use it in the strategy of his work, and so both slip out of control. Rader can deftly parody the halls-of-ivy mystique ("The lawns of Columbia are very wide and long and at night the lights filter against the pollution in the air and spread a soft white haze over the grass"), but at the crucial moment of his rebellion he pathetically falls victim to the mystique himself: "There were cops everywhere in sight. The campus was vacant of everyone else. And except for an occasional student shouting an obscenity at the cops from a window it was quiet. I loved the place. Despite all that had happened, I loved Columbia."

When idealism is unsuccessfully forced into a foreign structure, it may easily degenerate according to the classic pattern, from romanticism to sentimentality. The failure of Rader's work is not that he feels such contradictory emotions, which may be in themselves insightful, but that the deliberately rationalistic plan of his book cannot contain them. *I Ain't Marchin' Anymore*, while promising a strict analysis of ideals in conflict with reality, dissipates into an unstructured trauma of the narrator's identity. Although there are hints that the final problem is non-rational, that somehow "war and riots and escalating violence" are interwound "with the attack on manhood," Rader is unable to find any explanation satisfactory to the logical structure of his book. Why should the young white radical be forced "to create personhood while at the same time finding relief from tribal guilt, guilt whose victims clutter the ghettos of urban America"? In this very statement Rader plunges from the language of social psychology into the jargon of a pamphleteer. A victim of his own poster art, neither Rader himself nor the structure of his art can *explain* (his intended purpose) why the vain bloodshed of the Columbia bust "was the first event in most of our lives where we felt effective, where what we were doing belonged to us." Instead, we are offered a muddle of sentimentalism and hysteria, plus a weakly existential and most emphatically non-Aristotelian ending, where he admits that his radicals "were unable to concede that the only possible community was in rebellion." Such a conclusion has lyric potential, but is inorganic to Rader's plan. The author himself is plainly puzzled at the end, and so is the reader.

Jim Kunen's book is so different. It's the same campus, the same war, and in most cases the same politics, but the work produced from these sources tells quite another story. Kunen is closer to the events by not imposing a rational structure (he can't



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even decide on his own introduction, so he surrenders and gives us all four drafts), and lets his book record the most real event of all: the making of the book itself. He is straight-arrow honest about his content, and the form it's put in:

> This book was written on napkins and cigarette packs and hitchiking signs. It was spread all over, but so is my mind. I exhibit a marked tendency to forget things. I can remember only three things at a time. If I think of a fourth thing, I forget the first. Like a cigarette machine. You take one pack out—all the rest fall down a notch. Exactly analogous in every salient detail. The best, truest way to read this book would be to rip it up and throw the scraps all over the house. Then, later, should you come across a piece, read it, or don't read it, depending upon how you feel. Or, better, save it until four o'clock in the morning when you would rather do almost anything else, and read it then. Above all, don't spend too much time reading it because I didn't spend too much time writing it.

The hassle of writing the book becomes "the Book" itself. Selecting a journal form, he can enter for July 7, "At 5:30 the goddam birds started waking up with their familiar cry of 'Another-day - gone - and - you - haven't - done - shit caw, caw, caw, jweep.' " In the midst of recounting a problem with Columbia's Trustees he interrupts, "That does it, I can't write," and clears his mind with a page of speculations on handwriting, smoking, and Southern agrarian interests. On page 168, in mid-paragraph, "Here, arbitrarily, the Book ends" . . . but not before three postscripts. Yet Kunen is not at all naive, nor derelict in his responsibilities as artist. He mocks the idea that man can be enumerated, listed, or categorized, as when he nonsensically lists his likes and dislikes; and his form makes the same parody, that the events at Columbia in 1968 could be rationally organized. This form, in turn, facilitates a special view of the world, where logic can logically fracture logic ("I passed a store called 'Hard-to-Get-Records.' I wonder if they have easy-to-get records. If they don't that makes them hard to get, in which case they should have them"), and a lack of *a priori* structures can show the world in its own madness.

Kunen's method is honest, organic to the materials of his study, and reveals the ultimate truth of what's *really* going on. On the day of Robert Kennedy's assassination (one of the actual days he is writing "the Book"), Kunen considers the nature of death in Vietnamized America: "people aren't really shot; fire is directed at their positions. And they're not really people; they're troops. There aren't even dead men: only body counts. And the degree of deadness isn't always too bad; sometimes it's light or moderate instead of heavy." The basis of Kunen's honest and insightful position is his view of himself. Unlike Rader, described on his book-jacket as "The Eldridge Cleaver of the white new left," Kunen insists that "I am not a leader, you understand. But leaders cannot seize and occupy buildings. It takes great numbers of people to do that. I am one of those great numbers. What follows is the chronicle of a single revolutionary digit." He seems at times the nebbish of the student revolution: when challenged by jocks, "As is my wont in these situations, I begin enumerating all the jocks who are some of my best friends, really." Hitching in Connecticut, he has little luck: "A couple of times guys in cars gave me the finger. My reaction to that is generally one of relief that they didn't throw anything at me. Then a car came by and threw a beer can at me."

But nebbishness conceals a self which unheroically maintains its own identity within a Revolution which so easily contained Dotson Rader. During the first occupation Kunen amusingly watches out for the furniture and mops up spills, and "at four o'clock, like Pavlov's dog, I go to crew, assuring a long-hair at the door that I'll be back." Refreshingly, he can be caught in a personal dilemma, far from the Port Huron Statement, but of the nature which vitalizes narrative art: "God, what was I going to do?" he confesses. "I *liked* Dean Deane." Because Kunen's unstructured approach has not tried to reshape an unstructured experience, the self that emerges from these incidents is not at all traumatic or hysterical. He is quietly modest, yet his statements have the ring of authenticity, as when he tells his girlfriend, "I look up in my head and there's this great emptiness, a void; there's nothing there. I don't know anything." Apart from any rhetorical or heroic posturing, Kunen simply demonstrates that "I have a mad desire to live." And his sense of living in a confusing, absurd world emerges naturally, even spontaneously, from the Columbia experience. The "strawberry statement" itself suggests the ontology of Kunen's world. "Commenting on the importance of student opinion to the administration," he tells us, "Professor Deane declared 'Whether the students vote "yes" or "no" on an issue is like telling me they like strawberries.' " Kunen's simple reply, "I like strawberries," draws its power not from any revolutionary rhetoric, and only partially from the narrative of political events preceding the announcement. In a non-fiction novel, Barry Leeds has said of Norman Mailer, real-life experiences are to be read as imaginative literature, where the author functions not as a journalist, but rather as a "narrator/participant" who recounts historical events "through the subjective and metaphorically rich voice of the central character who experiences them." What Dotson Rader and even such critics as Richard Poirier describe as "The War Against the Young," Kunen sees as a war against the self. He answers a Dean, and a College, who treat him as if he did not exist by responding, as Erich Fromm would have it, by saying I am I. "I like strawberries." I am Spartacus.

*Standard Operating Procedure* draws closer to the war—right into it, in fact, with the grisly record of atrocities which may be our most noteworthy achievement in Southeast Asia. Artistically, the leap is even more profound, from the "Notes of a College Revolutionary" to the "Notes of a Draft-age American," which are, at first glance, the reams of testimony from the Citizens' Commission of Inquiry on U. S. War Crimes in Indochina. How do you write a book about war crimes? The record, already presented in three dozen other historical accounts, should speak for itself. When a group of my students brought Kunen to campus in March 1971, he was already past his fourth deadline, and he didn't finish it until September. "This was supposed to be an 'instant' book," he admits in its Preface, "to be



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published shortly after the Veterans' Inquiry. It is late because I had great difficulty with it. I did not see what I could possibly add to the testimony, or what right I had to add anything." The record should be able to speak for itself. But it can't—only people can speak. So from the start Kunen has some justification; it takes a human imagination, placed at the center of these experiences, to make them coherent and communicable. But old fashioned forms pale before the enormity of the events. "I told my friend," says Kunen, "that book writing is frustrating because you know you are doomed to failure before you even start, because there is a gap between the word symbols and reality—you can only write *about* things, you can't put things in a book." So how will we get to the true reality of the experience, what's *really* going on, especially in that most incredible of places, Vietnam?

Kunen's response is the same as for his college book: simple honesty, the reality of writing the book and the plain truth of *his* printed page. As opposed to the speechless record, Kunen is eloquent, but only because he closes the gap between "word symbols" and reality by making those symbols his reality. He tries to fool nobody; *Standard Operating Procedure* is not a rational synthesis of the war, but rather the imaginative and evocative act of an artist coming to personal terms with it. The record itself, collected by scores of G. I. veterans "spurred by troubled sleep and indelible stains on their hands," was that of "a collective ineloquent Macbeth." Kunen's success is that he articulates the otherwise unspeakable: the horror of the crimes, but also the insane unreality of their commission. Language may be the heart of it, since "Our whole Vietnam vocabulary is a lexicon of distortion." According to the Military Assistance Command, "South Vietnam" should always be called "The Republic of Vietnam," whereas "The Democratic Republic of Vietnam" must always be referred to as "North Vietnam." Troops of the North Vietnamese Army and of the National Liberation Front are termed "Communists" (what then are American soldiers: Imperialists? Registered Democrats and Republicans?). There is no real thing as death, as Kunen discovered when trying to comprehend Robert Kennedy's assassination—only casualties, which may with some reasonableness be only light or moderate. "Cost-of-living index, crime rate, hamlet-pacification rating, fielding average, industrial output, free-throw average, kill ratio—it's all the same," observes Kunen, "all an attempt to get a handle on the world with numbers, and thus make it manageable." And thus make it unreal. "It's an unfortunate wrinkle in our conceptual faculties that numbers of human beings killed becomes numbers. 1,000 x apples = 1,000 apples. 1,000 x people killed = 1,000." Listening to their testimony and talking with them personally, Kunen forever heard what these witnesses thought, never what they felt. "American males are taught not to pay any attention to feelings, which lead to 'emotionalism' and 'irrationality.' In no instance was a veteran able to describe to me what he felt during atrocities, only what went through his head." And that excludes much of the situation's reality.

The first corrective is to *be there.* "Americans, all of us, pro and anti," Kunen argues, "insist on thinking that Southeast Asia is a far-off corner of the world. When I was there, however, I found that Vietnam is not way off across the ocean. It is right there, right under your feet. The US is across the ocean, in a far-off corner of the world." It is a great imaginative leap, however, to this ultimate reality, and making it is Kunen's finest achievement. At least one veteran took the leap, too: Gary Battles, who made his separate peace in Vietnam so that he could find out what the war was about. To fully understand, one must create imaginative space. Kunen, twenty-three years old, thinks of his future grandchildren:

> They won't understand why the war did not become the center of our lives, why stopping it did not pre-empt all other concerns, why opposition did not progress far beyond *dissent.* They won't understand how it was possible that, while the war was going on, a new football league grew and merged with the old, hemlines rose and fell amid great controversy, and the nation rediscovered romance.

So James Simon Kunen becomes the imaginative center of this world, testing all possibilities and feeling the full effects. He breaks the structures which facilitate reason yet obscure the truth, and establishes a lyrical distance between judgement and event in which his full human powers can operate.

*The Strawberry Statement* and *Standard Operating Procedure* do not succeed by any facile adoption of topic. The subject matter is there; but more importantly it has been brought *here,* to the reader, through Kunen's imaginative, artistic act. It is a most profoundly personal and sincere act, equivalent to the expression of a novelist, poet, or any lyric artist; that is why the form of these books makes them non-fiction novels, and why their success supports Mr. Kunen's claims as a conscientious objector. His honesty aids him in his politics, and no less in his art. He criticizes the blatant unreality that in war dispatches, political speeches, and popular sentiment passes for the real thing, but he can also spot the problem on his own side of the fence, as when he finds an old leaflet scheduling an emergency conference for Friday to discuss and act upon the "imminent invasion of North Vietnam" and the threatened Third World Genocide, but cannot tell what "Friday" the leaflet may have referred to ("There was *no connection* between that leaflet and the reality of the war"). Kunen occupied Hamilton Hall at Columbia, but also rowed crew; he sees at once that "it's absurd and probably obscene to be paddling around in something that's worth two years' rent to families down the hill from the campus," but also that "There's no way to convert crew shells into food or to redirect the funds of the people who give them." He has the sense to explain to his movement colleagues and to the readers of *Sports Illustrated,* where these comments appeared (June 16, 1969): "It's like 'eat your potatoes, Johnny, there are people starving in China.' "

As a first-person journalist, Kunen has emerged with a reputation as the gentle freak, covering such American banalities as the launch of Apollo 11, and making such clear headed observations as "At T minus 7 the sun came up, an event of considerably greater magnitude than the launching, but no-one noticed" (a few other good ones,



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from the same affair: "I went into a NASA coffee wagon. You come to the cream before the coffee before the cups. All the best minds went into the rocket"; "I considered tripping over a wire, cutting off TV coverage, just to see if they'd postpone the launch until Huntleybrinkley and the Cronk got back on"; "I watched a helicopter take off. It wasn't a rocket, but then it wasn't 3½ miles away, either"; and a query about the real thing, free from restraints of press credentials, anonymous sources, and criminal, cowardly courtesy: " 'James Kunen for the US Quarterly,' I said during the question period. 'I'd like to direct a question to Dr. von Braun. How do working conditions at Cape Kennedy compare to those in Nazi Germany when you developed the V-2 robot bomb for use against the British civilian population?' ").

In a series of essays about the war for *True* magazine (the best is "Pieces of War," May 1971), Kunen sought an answer for Vietnam in the simplest, most mundane places, and found it only by placing himself in the experience. The form of his works exhibits the same honesty: no games, no illusions, no attempt to supply a rational structure, but rather the presentation of the most immediate reality at hand, the writing of his books, and from these indisputable facts to draw the substance of his art. In this manner Kunen maintains the realest thing around: himself. His contemporaries—Rader, Gerzon, Zorza—are movement journalists. As editor of *Defiance*, Rader reminds his readership of "the essential issues which in point of fact define us: an immediate and unconditional end to the American war of aggression in Southeast Asia; an end to racism; self-determination for colonial peoples within and outside the United States; the abolition of sexual chauvinism." Although Jim Kunen might sympathize with and even work actively for these causes, his art does not allow him to be *defined* by them. He rather celebrates a self which, in the fact of oppression by a university, a government, or the cosmos itself, maintains and revels in its integrity and independence. Writing on the solar eclipse for *Esquire* (July 1970), Kunen noted why he, and so many others, were drawn to watch it. "Not so much to see the eclipse," he realized, "but to avoid never seeing one." He is most impressed because

> the next total eclipse over a populated area of the United States is going to be in 2024. To watch an eclipse is to see a very common thing, really, a thing which has happened perhaps two billion times and will happen two billion times more, but only one time when you are alive. Eclipse watching tells you that you are going to die. For sure. It's a way of confronting your mortality. It is a very dangerous sport.

Sincerely,
*—Jerome Klinkowitz*

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OBSCENITIES, by Michael Casey. Yale. $1.75
THE ESCAPE INTO YOU, by Marvin Bell. Atheneum, $3.95.
THE FEED THEY LION, by Philip Levine. Atheneum, $3.95.
CONCURRING BEASTS, by Stephen Dobyns. Atheneum, $3.95.
AMPUTATIONS, by Cynthia Macdonald. Braziller, $2.95.

The war is over. The president tells us so, and I have seen him on T. V., reciting the Lord's Prayer after his peace negotiations; it must be true. At least the war most of us will hear about is over and it nudged American poetry, making it less insular, less devoted to the fineries of mere "technique" as Bly calls our obsession with craft. But the Vietnam war didn't inspire much *good* poetry. *Obscenities* by Michael Casey, winner of the 1972 Yale Series of Younger Poets award, has to be the significant exception.

Take the advice of Stanley Kunitz's introduction. I did: "I recommend reading this book straight through, from first to last, as though it were a novel or a play . . ." When you do, you'll find you don't puzzle over niceties, you read on, pushed by unpunctuated, constantly enjambing four and five word lines. Each poem is a dramatic monologue cast as splintered anecdote, speech which could be shaped from the side of the mouth between puffs on a cigarette. Here's the whole (forgive the triple pun) of "The LZ Gator Body Collector":

> See
> Her back is arched
> Like something's under it
> That's why I thought
> It was booby trapped
> But it's not
> It just must have been
> Over this rock here
> And somebody moved it
> After corpus morta stiffened it
> I didn't know it was
> A woman at first
> I couldn't tell
> But then I grabbed
> Down there
> It's a woman or was
> It's all right
> I didn't mind
> I had gloves on then

Casey's ear is matchless for rendering dialogue and individuating characters, all of them squeezed by their situation into confessing the horrible as matters-of-fact. Each person here is both accomplice in atrocity and hapless victim of it through the web of army rules and, beyond them, the barbarity of war itself. From this paradox a peculiar humor arises, not unlike *Catch-22* or *M*A*S*H*. Barbarity is the real authority here, the real obscenity, and we experience this tension without the poems singly giving explicit judgment about any more than their own situations, for the characters are too entrapped to generalize. In his titles and by sections within a stanza Casey establishes authority, rendering it as freakishly funny as a found poem: *e.g.*, "The Company Physical Combat Proficiency Test Average" or "Message in the Public Interest." "Prisoner of War" recites:

> Subject
> Stated that at Tuyet Diem #4
> Were four male medics whose
> Names and ages she did not
> Know but who never carried weapons.
> Subject could not describe
> The type of weapons which the
> Male medics did not carry.

That's one language of impersonalization here. Another is the tissue of gratuitous four letter words (standard army talk) which Casey wraps around the terrible until we recognize that the insistent repetition of sexual expletives is the language of non-sense. I mean language referring to the physical which has lost its physical basis, thus its semantic one. It's become a kind of muteness. Casey's book makes scatology the expression of a blunted eschatology where "the horror" as Conrad spoke of it in *Heart of Darkness* is shifted to the surface as a banality.



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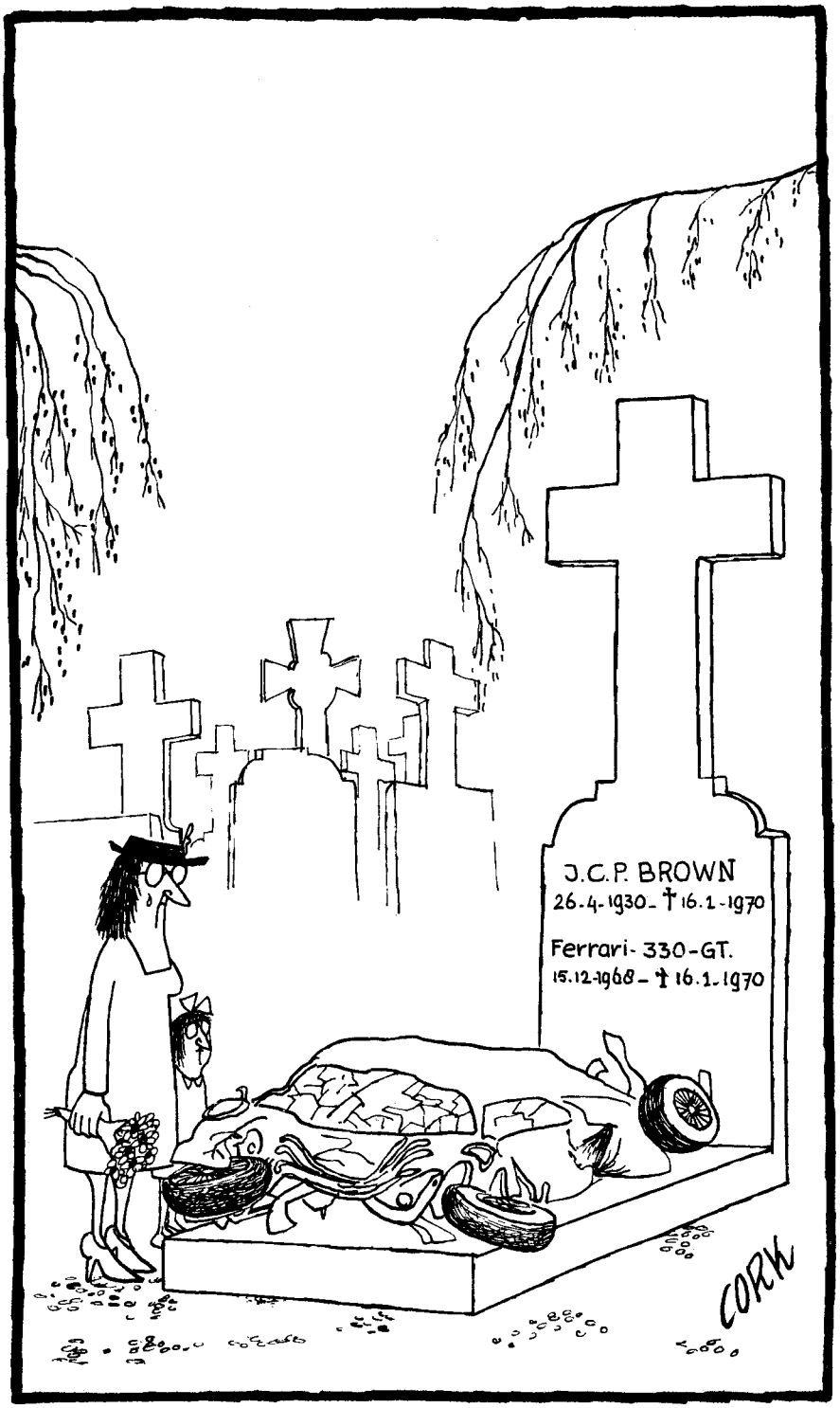
I hope he wants me to recoil: I do. I recommend this shattering first book even to non-readers of poetry.

Only two years after his first book, *A Probable Volume of Dreams*, won the 1969 Lamont Poetry Award, Marvin Bell brought out another, even more remarkable as a sustained performance by one of the most distinctive voices among the younger poets writing today. Like *Obscenities*, *The Escape Into You* is a sequence, a book, not a collection. Bell draws on traditions we have associated with the love lyric from Petrarch to the present only to re-invent them all for his own purposes. Real because she is made—in many senses of the word—, "you" is continuously pursued by Bell the lover-clown-straight man through the intricacies of his own language and form.

This author seems to know the dangers of writing such a sequence—the tendency to fall into sheer sentimentality and bathos or mere conceit-spinning. But his mastery of the techniques he imposes (Bell knows real freedom lies in inventing your own restraints, not in pretending you have none) obviates these problems. With the exception of "The Children," which adds one additional line, all the poems here are written in three six line stanzas, the form of Berryman's *Dream Songs*. However, Bell isn't interested in weaving different voices through the stanzas like Berryman but in modulating one voice across them with echoes which are Hebraic and aphoristic. Stanza comes to be a sort of verse paragraph with every enjambing line having its own integrity as a sub-unit *and* playing backwards and forwards on other lines. My description belabors matters; all the stitching and unstitching sounds like a moment's thought here. Under pressure to perform, language is clipped, packed, tensed and yet sounds "spoken".

> I give the black pit dream's head,
> not fearing to hit bottom, to the water
> I offer my head like a stone,
> just as my tongue enters silence
> a thick air collects in both ears,
> and then I'm in Heaven like a piece of dirt.
> ("The Answer")

*The Escape Into You* is a kind of Yiddish *Prothalamion*, recognizing that the whole condition of loving-praising




has to be as suspicious of itself as is the modern consciousness. Even as a punster, and he is an excellent one, Bell travels lightly, taking back almost as much as he gives. In "I Adore You" the title is undercut again and again until finally (in parody of Jewish life, the Mother's idiom is evoked with a half turn into her idiom) the speaker proclaims "Mother thought you an angel." But then: "down from heaven, up for grabs." Bell's is a new kind of confessional poetry where what is made up is real, where the veritudes are the funniest gags and what's moving is always on-the-run.

Like Bell's, the next two books of poetry are also from Atheneum. *They Feed They Lion*, Philip Levine's most recent volume, is a magnificent achievement. As in his earlier work, Levine's language here continues to be hard-bitten, spare; now the tone has more naturalness, however. His simplicity is a hard-won kind, derived from Williams but much denser and carrying



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the musicality of the earlier Levine beneath the surface.

Huddling to where it fell,
like a stunned animal,
the stone stayed. I kneel
to it and see how dust
has caked over half of it
like a protruding lip
or a scab on no cut
but on a cutting edge.
("The Cutting Edge")

Levine can off-rhyme that effortlessly in poem after poem. His short, enjambing lines consistently confront the essential: the sparrow is his bird, the ground he walks on is sand or rock. Behind all the poems, though, is a spiritual vision I hadn't found in earlier work, a view of our world as fallen—where elements of the transcendent shine in secular details. His preoccupation with Detroit is not new, but it is now spiritualized. In "Detroit Grease Shop Poem," for example, there is a strange limbo created from the imagery:

Stars
on Lemon's wooden palm,
stars that must be capped,
rolled and annointed,
that have their orders
and their commands as he
has his.
Under the blue
hesitant light another day
at Automotive
in the city of dreams.
We're all here to count
and be counted . . .

To the things of this world Levine gives a peculiar sacredness; they aren't counters for that transcendent "other" but themselves the only form spirit can assume. He breaks his voice against the hard surface of these forms and from this a tough, bright music shoots up like sparks reaching to be fire. Here is "Breath":

Today
in this high clear room
of the world, I squat
to the life of rocks
jewelled in the stream
or whispering
like shards. What fears
are still held locked
in the veins till the last
fire, and who will calm
us then under a gold sky
that will be all of earth.

Stephen Dobyns's *Concurring Beasts* was the 1971 Lamont Poetry Selection. Dobyns's poetry resembles few other current poets', though his interest in magic and his litanyesque structures might seem to relate him to many *Kayak* writers. More oblique than any other poet in this review, Dobyns convinces us of his necromancer's vision by never faltering in the weaving of his spells. The tone is so perfectly controlled that we come away from each poem convinced the world must be constituted as he dreams it:

After the tables and chairs
voted to march on Pittsburgh,
the two rabbits grew a lawn
of their own and the barns waltzed
off through fields of ribald song.
All this happened yesterday . . .
("Explaining the Nature of Evidence")

How could it be otherwise? we think. As in Lewis Carroll (from whom he draws an epigraph for the fifth part of his book), Dobyns always sees the fantastic as ordinary. And like Swift, he uses it in service of a satire directed against both general human foibles and the particular failings of our society. He writes by the sentence (as Bell did by the phrase, as Levine did by the word) and has a dry wit which succeeds in winking at the surprising even within the texture of poems where the unexpected is his norm.

Especially noteworthy among *Beasts's* poems are "Hotel," "Continue By Waking," "Counterparts," "Contingencies," "Passing the Word" and "The Way of Keys." Dobyns writes dream poetry which shows us we aren't sleeping but awake as we experience it. The objects in his poems are subject to a constant metamorphosis which is like nightmare, but in their shifting they suggest a vast potentiality to be more than themselves. As readers we participate in that potentiality and it comes to be a sort of grace.

*Amputations* by Cynthia Macdonald is anything but truncated poetry. Her best poems are extended pieces on subjects; yet they are not just frivolous when they are funny nor mere tricks when they are tricky. Macdonald writes elongated shaggy dog stories which push the speaker's obsession to its excruciating conclusion. We find her constructing a platform, carrying a suitcase everywhere she goes, making up a new dictionary, doing, always doing. The modes of contemporary life get satirized—our current preoccupation with suicide, for example. Even a poem with a title like this keeps a poker face in every line: "Reply to the Request From the Remaining Poet for Suicide Suggestions." Here's part of suggestion number one:

1) You buy a sailing vessel, like Chichester,
And let excitement build about your trip
around the world.
The press must be informed that all you
know of sailing was learned
The summer you were seven and almost
drowned
Off Falmouth . . .
Tack the manuscript of your suicide poems
to the mast
And wait. Or slip overboard if slow deaths
Do not appeal to you.

I won't give away the last suggestion.

The funniest poem for me (perhaps because he once visited a creative writing class I was in and told us much the same thing) is "Instruction from Bly" where the speaker has followed up on his advice: "The poet told me if I was serious/ I must isolate myself for at least a year." Working in a gas station ("the only woman s.s. attendent in N. D"), the speaker "finds herself.":

I have discovered I drink when I am solitary.
I
Have discovered I can read page ninety-two
of
REMEMBERENCE OF THINGS PAST
twenty times in solitary
Without ever reading it. If I don't die of
alcoholism,
I will of cholesterol: solitary cooking.
fryfryfry fryfry fryfryfryfry frydie

Rhyme is important, my way of keeping
A grip on things. I wonder if the poet
meant
It would all happen after I left, or if he is
a sadist
Who wants to send all those stupid enough
to sit
at his feet to N. D. or S. D. or West Va. . .

Macdonald's are "premise poems"; they state a condition, then trace all its ramifications however ridiculous. Sometimes I know she's laughing with us. Her last poem, "Another Attempt at the Trick," is a metaphor for her work as a whole. Here a tightrope walker gets his legs amputated only to marry a bearded lady who's losing her hair chin. He marries her, impregnates her, then they perfect an act in which she walks the wire balancing their twins, "the answer to a tightrope walker's prayers." Macdonald walks that wire herself and never stumbles, each poem maintaining its outrageous sense of balance. —*Peter Cooley*



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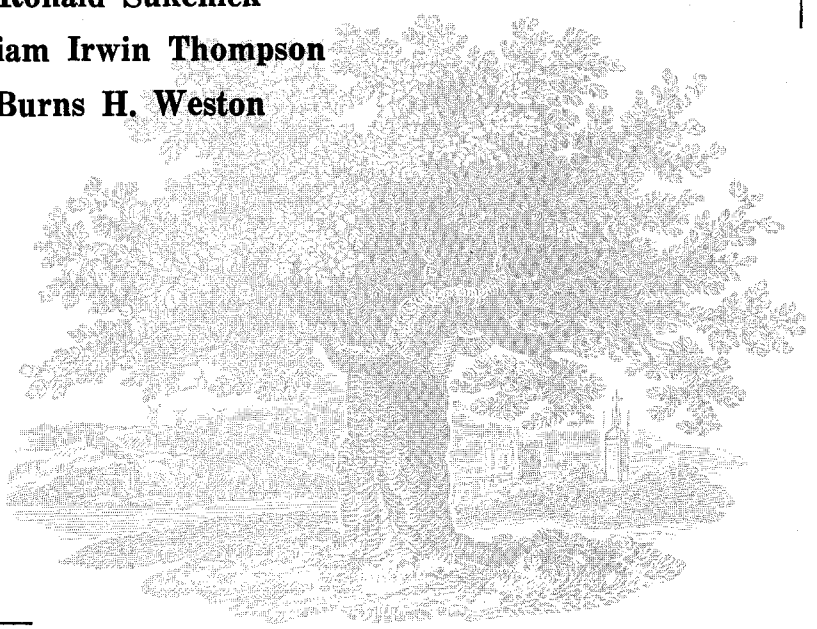

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